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**CONSTRUCTIONS OF IDENTITY  
THROUGH MUSIC IN  
EXTREME-RIGHT SUBCULTURES**

**Joe Stroud**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Music  
The University of Edinburgh  
2014**



## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis, submitted in candidature for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, and the research within it is my own work, except where explicitly stated in the text, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Joe Stroud

9 January 2014



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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the musical cultures associated with extreme-right politics, considering not only what this music projects about extreme-right ideology, but also the various ways in which music functions as part of a political subculture. This analysis extends beyond the stereotypical extreme-right music associated with the skinhead subculture, often referred to as Oi!, to incorporate extreme-right engagement with genres such as metal, folk, country and classical music. The chapters explore various aspects of identity—including race, sexuality, gender and class—and their significance to and reflection through extreme-right music, as manifested in genre choices, lyrics, album artwork and the features of the music itself. The thesis also considers the way in which less explicit content is produced and the motivation behind this, the importance of myth and fantasy in extreme-right music, and the way that the conspiracist mindset—which is prevalent, albeit not homogeneous, in extreme-right culture—is articulated both in extreme-right music and in the interpretation of mainstream music as antagonistic to extreme-right goals.

Music is significant to extreme-right politics for a number of reasons. It is generally understood to be an effective tool in the indoctrination and recruitment of individuals into extreme-right ideology and politics, which is why music is sometimes freely distributed, particularly to youths. The very existence of this music can act to legitimise extreme-right views through the implication that they are shared by its producers and audience. Music also acts as an important tool for the imagining of an extreme-right community through its creation of a space to meet and create networks, a function consolidated by the media surrounding music, particularly websites, forums and magazines. As well as constructing the spaces for extreme-right communities, this music plays an important role in identifying the characteristics of those communities, in articulating what it is to be “us” as contrasted to “them.” Analysis of this music suggests that it has the ability to resolve the ideological contradictions which define the extreme right, even as this analysis reveals such contradictions.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

This list covers those abbreviations used frequently in the text, with geographical location included where appropriate:

B&H: Blood & Honour (International and generally split into national chapters, founded in Great Britain)

BNP: British National Party

EDL: English Defence League

FN: Front National (France)

KKK: Ku Klux Klan

NA: National Alliance (United States)

NF: National Front (Great Britain)

NPD: Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party of Germany)

RAC: Rock Against Communism (International, founded in Great Britain)

RAR: Rock Against Racism (International, founded in Great Britain)

SD: Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats)

ZOG: Zionist Occupation Government—the conspiracist belief that Jews secretly control a country, with the visible government merely a puppet regime. The term seems to have originated in the United States (c.1976) but is a relatively new addition to the canon of anti-Semitic conspiracies, and is in common usage among the extreme right internationally.

**Introduction:**  
**Constructions of Identity Through Music**  
**in Extreme-Right Subcultures**

The attacks of Anders Behring Breivik in Norway on 22nd July 2011—and, to a lesser extent, the shootings perpetrated by Wade Michael Page in a Sikh temple in Wisconsin on 5th August 2012—are perhaps the most notorious modern examples of extreme-right activity, but the present-day extreme right has not only made its mark through terrorist atrocities. Since the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. in 2001—and in some cases for a significant time before—the extreme right has been increasingly visible in local, national and international contexts, particularly in its embracing and appropriation of Islamophobia. The increasing electoral successes of extreme-right parties, and the encroachment of extremist rhetoric and policies into mainstream political discourse, have led to an increase in academic attention on the subject.

A similar flurry of success and attention occurred in the early- to mid-1990s, and the academic scrutiny at that time included the musical culture of the extreme right. The significance of music to the extreme right in the 21st century has so far been relatively neglected, implying that it is less relevant to the current movement on the whole. However, at its peak the extreme-right music scene was said to be a multi-million dollar industry, and its musicians were able to appeal on an international scale. This thesis shows that, in contrast to the implied insignificance of music in contemporary extreme-right culture through its omission from recent research, music still has an important role. Comparisons of the four most significant extreme-right music-producing nations and their political context shows that this role is far from homogeneous.

Existing literature tends to treat the extreme-right music scene as if it is historic, or at least static. Focus has been generally on one, albeit highly significant, genre, referred to by a variety of terms such as “White Power Rock ’n’ Roll,” “Hate

Rock,” “Nazi Punk” and “Neo-Nazi Music.”<sup>1</sup> This genre, primarily associated with the skinhead subculture, is still largely dominant in the United States and Germany, while in other countries the tightening of hate-speech laws and the modernisation programmes of extreme-right movements have marginalised it. Other genres are therefore being recruited into the extreme-right music scene, even in the United States, where folk and country music in particular are being exploited.

There is a particular focus in this thesis on Germany, Great Britain, Sweden and the United States. Existing research has mostly concentrated on these countries, albeit usually in isolation; international assessments do exist, either in straight accounts of extreme-right music in two countries<sup>2</sup> or a more cursory summary to contextualise a domestic situation.<sup>3</sup>

There are two main reasons for choosing these four nations. Firstly, this is a study of the extreme right in a Western context, where the movement originally was—and in some cases still is—based around vehement anti-Communism and anti-Socialism. These subcultures all developed in nations with mainstream political opinion opposed to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and in this regard the extreme right were broadly aligned with national policy, if not in the intensity and form of their opposition. This is of course problematic in the case of Germany given its division into West and East during the Cold War, but it is clear that—like the dominant role of the capitalist state during reunification—it is the Western *culture* of skinheads and racism that dominates the contemporary German scene, even if it is most prominent in the former Eastern *Länder*.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy S. Brown, ‘Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and “Nazi Rock” in England and Germany’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol.38, No.1, 2004, pp.157-78; Art Jipson, ‘Introduction to the Special Issue: Influence of Hate Rock’, *Popular Music and Society*, Vol.30, No.4, 2007, pp. 449-51; Ugo Corte and Bob Edwards, ‘White Power music and the mobilization of racist social movements’, *Music and Arts in Action*, Vol.1, No.1, 2008, pp.4-20.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the summary of Germany and England in Brown, ‘Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics’.

<sup>3</sup> Such as Corte and Edwards, ‘White Power music’, which primarily refers to the United States but which refers to practices in other countries.

A strong component within the extreme-right culture of Western Europe is the presence of what has variously been called Nordicism, Germanism and Aryanism: the belief that the white peoples of North-West Europe are racially superior to the whites of Southern and Eastern Europe, as well as to other ethnicities. This is not a uniform belief across the entire Western extreme right; indeed, many in the movement have spoken of the need to cooperate with ideological comrades outside the Nordic region in the construction of “Fortress Europe” in order to preserve European identity in the face of immigration, and there has been support even in musical form for emergent allies in the former Soviet states and the new Balkan nations. However, “Aryan” ideals and lyrics have often permeated much of the music of the extreme right, and it is probably no coincidence that Aryanism and neo-Nazism have been important aspects of the extreme right in the countries studied.<sup>4</sup> It is these countries in Western Europe (Germany, Great Britain, Sweden) and the United States that have driven the music scene forward, and frequently capitalised on its potential.

Secondly, these four countries are the major producers of extreme-right cultural products, primarily music. Simultaneously, they appear to be the largest consumers of extreme-right music, though this point is harder to verify given the absence of sales figures and the increase of piracy and file-sharing over the last fifteen years. These nations have also been major touring destinations for bands, with a peak in the mid-1990s for festivals and concerts. While a number of factors might contribute to the proliferation of concerts, particularly local laws and lack of organised opposition to performances, the fact that many bands were able to make economically viable tours of Germany and Sweden for a number of years,

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<sup>4</sup> For academic work on the extreme right in Eastern Europe, see Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999; Cas Mudde (ed.), *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe*, London: Routledge, 2004; Hilary Pilkington, Al’Bina Garifzianova and Elena Omel’Chenko, *Russia’s Skinheads*, London: Routledge, 2010. A scholar who frequently includes music in his analysis is Anton Shekhostov; see particularly ‘Apoliteic music: Neo-folk, Martial Industrial and “metapolitical fascism”’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol.43 No.5, 2009, pp.431-457; see also the chapters on White Power music in Hungary, Romania and the Czech Republic in Anton Shekhovtsov and Paul Jackson (eds.), *White Power Music: Scenes of Extreme-Right Cultural Resistance*, Ilford: Searchlight and RNM Publications, 2012.



particularly during the 1980s and 1990s—in what is essentially an amateur business in which musicians are usually unable to sustain themselves solely through their music—suggests a significant fan-base in these countries. Other factors have since shown their importance, however; the outlawing of hate speech and Nazi glorification in Germany has diminished its viability as a touring destination for foreign bands, with some prominent German musicians imprisoned for continuing to play, while the opposition of anti-Fascist campaigners in Sweden, and laws relating to hate speech, have hampered the ability of the extreme right in their traditional practices. It is undoubtedly the trend of legislation that curbs the more graphic and confrontational of extreme-right music which has led to the scene slipping from academic and journalistic attention. Extreme-right music is still the subject of much scrutiny in the United States, particularly from organisations such as the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center; it is likely that primacy of free speech in the United States, which has prevented legislation which can inhibit extreme-right music, has meant that the scene there has been able to continue in much the same way as it always has.

The opening chapter of this thesis considers the political history of the extreme right in each of these principal countries, as well as the musical cultures that these countries have engendered, and presents some factors which may have contributed to their primacy. It begins by defining the terminology—not only “extreme right” but also far right, radical right, neo-Nazi etc.—used to assess the political parties and movements in question, and the characteristics which lead to their application. A thorough critique of these terms is required not only to justify the terminology used, but to highlight the common factors which unite these disparate movements. However, a comprehensive cross-border comparison of these groups is difficult, for though they are part of an international movement which presents itself as united, each is situated within and dependent on a specific historical and cultural context; while these groups may have enough in common to share campaign platforms and even funds—as well as creating alliances in bodies such as the

European Parliament—each depends on the particular circumstances of its home nation for its existence and support. A similar cultural specificity is apposite in the consideration of the music scenes; put simply, the cultures of each country have had a distinctive influence on the music they produce.

To simplify the complexities, the political context of the extreme right in each country is examined in isolation. This will allow for a deeper understanding of the context from which the music scenes emerged. Like most research in this field,<sup>5</sup> this analysis places a primacy on the influence of British band Skrewdriver. For this reason, due to the particular influence of its music scene on the other countries, Britain is examined first, followed by Germany and Sweden. The United States is assessed last due to its unique features, such as its long history of multi-racial immigration, and its own history of extreme-right music going back to the Ku Klux Klan. These countries are then analysed in a more comparative way through an analysis of the effects of censorship and hate-speech legislation in each.

While Chapter One explores the political and historical context in these significant nations, Chapter Two is in part an account of why extreme-right music is deemed necessary, beyond its financial and recruitment potential. Given that extreme-right ideology contains many strands which espouse white supremacism, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is a tendency to believe that the extreme right—and the white race in general—are victims of conspiracies conducted by nefarious forces in order to keep them down. This chapter analyses not only the transmission of conspiracy theories through extreme-right music, but also the way that the movement views mainstream popular music. The latter has altered from an absolute dismissal of the form towards a more focused attack—not on the form itself, but on the way in which it is apparently used to promote a conspiratorial multicultural agenda. This ties in with the extreme-right tenet that mass culture, and the mass media, are conspiring

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Helene Lööw, 'White Noise Music: An International Affair', Paper presented at 1st World Conference on Music and Censorship, Copenhagen 20-22 November 1998. Available at Freemuse: <http://www.freemuse.org/sw6649.asp>, accessed 11 Sep 2011; Robert Futrell, Pete Simi and Simon Gottschalk, 'Understanding Music in Movements: The White Power Music Scene', *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol.47, 2006, pp.275-304.

against them. It is therefore seen as essential that the extreme right establishes its own media, of which music is a fundamental component, in order to counteract the subversive and conspiratorial intentions of the mainstream.

Chapter Three begins the detailed examination of the music itself through an analysis of genre identification, and its significance for projecting a “white” identity. By associating with and using genres which have as little identification with non-white ethnicities as possible, or by claiming white identity for genres and ignoring their multicultural origins, the extreme right convey not only the cultural styles they perceive to be explicitly “white,” but also what it is they believe it means to *be* white. This chapter notes how this discourse has been changing over the past few years; whiteness has been invoked less as a marker of racial superiority, and more as a sign of cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. The use of less confrontational genres that highlight aspects of tradition, community and heritage—particularly folk music—represents a major shift from the previous confrontational incitement and belligerence. However, the occasional presence of less emphatically “white” genres—such as electro, pop and rap—speaks to another purpose of generic variation: the desire to appeal to youth cultures and the hope that mass cultural products will garner mass cultural appeal.

The notion of mass appeal is also relevant in Chapter Four, which considers the significance of populism in extreme-right rhetoric, particularly in regard to constructions of class. Populism is a difficult concept to define: it is variously referred to in context as a political ideology, a philosophy, or a style. Academic (and common) usage is inconsistent, tending towards political action, although the term is frequently used to describe extreme-right parties, or policies associated with their ideology. In music, this is manifested in genres associated with the “ordinary people,” such as the punk association with street culture, heavy metal’s association with the working class, or folk music’s apparent origin among “the folk” themselves. Populism is just as apparent in the lyrics of songs; by adopting populist themes and language, political parties such as the BNP hope to extend their appeal beyond their

base in the alienated working class to broader society. This chapter considers the association of the extreme right with populism, particularly in the portrayal of the working class with notions of decency, virtue and honesty. The chapter's assessment of populism considers it as a style, which the extreme right have begun to use as a means of portraying themselves as representing the decent communities of their nation, valuing the community and tradition. At the same time, the extreme right's rhetoric contrasts the "people" with elites and with ethnic minorities (particularly Muslims and Jews), solidifying an attitude of "Us and Them" which is frequently articulated in the music they release and promote. Through this use of populism, the extreme right is portrayed as a genuine contrast to the "elite" of established political parties, while also constructing an ideology of what class means, and how the attributes of class, in varying manifestations, define national identity. In these definitions of national identity, immigrants are often cited as lacking the qualities the extreme right associate with class.

One of the ways in which many extreme-right supporters feel marginalised is in the loss of the privileged place of white males. While equal rights legislation is intended to promote equality, it is perceived by the extreme right as a tool of oppression, purposefully designed to keep down the white race—which is understood primarily in terms of manhood—and providing benefits for women, homosexuals and ethnic minorities which their abilities do not merit. This interpretation reflects the overwhelming maleness of what might be called the mainstream extreme right, most visibly evident in the skinhead subculture and, with some exceptions, reflected in contemporary political parties and the demographics of their support. Frequently, the portrayal of masculinity is intimately bound up with violence, with songs often valourising real and imagined exploits of warrior archetypes. Chapter Five explores the way in which extreme-right masculinity is constructed, the significance of violence to this construction, and the associations between music and violence. Music is important not only in communicating ideas about violence, but also in providing a space or context in which violence can be

enacted. The violent rituals integral to extreme-right concerts provide one example of this, as do a litany of violent attacks on perceived enemies in which music has been cited as a factor. Music is also an important means of allowing musicians and listeners to imagine violence, which is understood as a purging force which will lead to a better world.

The violent masculinity associated with the warrior identity is an important facet of the Viking imagery which is commonly adopted by the extreme right, but this use also has a religious aspect. Chapter Six examines the lyrical and symbolic themes which have arisen to act as a surrogate for religion in Europe, with particular attention paid to the pagan revival of Nordic Gods. Religion is another facet used by the extreme right as a marker of why immigration is detrimental to the host society,<sup>6</sup> but while extremists have always been able to point to the incompatibility of other religions with European culture, it has been much more difficult for them to claim a coherent religious identity for Europe, or even particular regions of it. Certainly, the extreme right in Europe have tended towards Protestantism,<sup>7</sup> but shared religion, rather than the fear of another, has never been a consistent or reliable unifier in the movement. While these pagan gods originated in a fairly limited geographical space, they have been adopted across Western Europe and the United States, with reports of an upswing in conversion to pagan religions. However, not all those who evoke this imagery do so for overtly religious reasons, instead citing it as a component in a broader narrative of myth-telling, attempting to emphasise the traditions that make regions and their inhabitants unique. At the same time, there is often an attempt to mythologise ideologically suitable events and figures and situate them within the

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<sup>6</sup> For example, pointing to the apparent incompatibility of Islam with the host countries' liberal Western principles, and arguing that the maintenance of Western traditions of tolerance requires the legislation of intolerance towards Muslims. Such a practice is not necessarily new, being reminiscent of the blood libel accusations against Jews (the belief that Jews sacrificed Christian children to use their blood in certain religious rituals) which date back at least as far as the 12th century. Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. by Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> As seen in the support for Protestant Loyalists in Northern Ireland, or the hostility towards Papal Authority and the Catholic Church in general.

mythological canon, so, for example, one comes across songs which present Hitler and the Nazis as romanticised founding fathers of the extreme right. This preoccupation with myth also finds an outlet in the engagement of the extreme right with fantasy, often involving the interpretation of stories such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* as analogies for the struggle of the extreme right. In particular, fantasy depictions of the battle between good and evil are seen as representing the struggle between "indigenous" whites and immigrants.

While extreme-right music has received a certain amount of academic attention, the current literature has neglected to acknowledge the diversity of musical forms and styles exploited by the extreme right. The musical style of the extreme right is generally characterised as having emerged from a deliberately simplistic form of punk known as Oi! in the late 1970s, transforming into a more straightforward form of traditional rock in the 1980s. Often, these styles used lyrics with explicit National Socialist references, and bands tended to conform to skinhead stereotypes in their image. Attention to Oi! and rock certainly reflects the dominant component in the scene, but does not begin to cover the huge breadth of genres which have been adopted by the extreme right. There are even many in the movement (although they were increasingly marginalised during the 1980s and 1990s and are all but gone today) who would eschew popular music altogether, in favour of the "high culture" eminence of Western classical music. Similar arguments have been used about folk music, while a number of other genres—including pop, country and metal—have been exploited. This diversity of genres is a major part of Chapter Seven, which explores the "softer" sides of extreme-right music—particularly in terms of genre, lyrics and image—and the ideological justifications behind this usage. While this tendency is in part a reaction to censorship, the chapter shows that these "softer" examples are also crucial in retaining a sense of community and solidarity among those who find the prevalent musical styles unappealing.

The notions of identity running throughout these chapters tie into the concluding remarks about the way music functions in extreme-right constructions of

identity, considering particularly what music itself contributes to these constructions, and why it is so integral to extreme-right subcultures. The contemporary extreme right—in line with its ideological predecessor, fascism—is often seen as an ideology of negativity: it is only deemed to be able to thrive in a context in which it can point to enemies. While this has some truth, the extreme right can only truly make inroads when it appears to offer a positive alternative that is worth voting for; this is something that it strives to do, and which many voters believe it already does. Absolutely central to the musical discourse of the extreme right is a particular notion of class, and it offers a romanticised account of class culture in an attempt to appeal to those who feel marginalised by the various effects of globalisation. It also offers a sense of what it is to be British, Swedish, German, American etc., and, on a broader level, what it is to be white. This thesis is intended not only to address the extreme-right music scene as a modern phenomenon, rather than merely a historic one, but also to examine how it constructs its narratives of identity, through its use of concepts such as nationalism, class and myth.

By exploring these different and diverse aspects of extreme-right culture and ideology, this thesis extends scholarly attention beyond the often caricatured extreme-right archetypes of skinhead and Ku Klux Klan member—archetypes which do not adequately encompass the diversity of ideologies and identities found beneath the extreme-right umbrella. Such diversity in the ideology of racism has already been recognised by, among others, Étienne Balibar:

Certainly there is not *a* racist philosophy, particularly since racist thinking does not always assume a systematic form. Contemporary neo-racism directly confronts us today with a variety of historical and national forms: the myth of the “racial struggle,” evolutionist anthropology, “differentialist” culturalism, sociobiology and so on.<sup>8</sup>

Each of these aspects is certainly apparent throughout this thesis, but it is important to state that any characterisation of extreme-right politics as merely an ideology of racism is reductive. Not only is racism variously embraced and rejected by extreme-

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<sup>8</sup> Étienne Balibar, ‘Racism and Nationalism’, in Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. by Chris Turner, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, London and New York: Verso, 1991, p.55.

right supporters, it is not the sole pillar of extreme-right ideology, and therefore cannot be conceived of as the sole appeal to voters and supporters: extreme-right politics also has much to say to its audience on matters such as gender, class and morality. This thesis demonstrates how analysis of the music of this political culture can reveal much about the multi-faceted nature of the contemporary extreme right, as well as showing more generally the fundamental roles that music is playing here in constructing and reflecting ideologies and identities.

## **Terminology**

Chapter One includes an analysis of the various terms used to denote the extreme-right political family, as well my own reasons for preferring the term “extreme right” and what I understand that term to encompass. Here I define some of the other important terms used in this thesis.

The literature on extreme-right music is preceded by academic interest in skinheads from the perspective of subcultural theory, particularly the work of John Clarke and Dick Hebdige.<sup>9</sup> Skinheads have been central to most analyses of extreme-right music, and the literature follows Clarke’s and Hebdige’s characterisation of them as a subculture.<sup>10</sup> The characterisation of extreme-right music taking place in subcultural sites is evident in work that goes beyond skinheads.<sup>11</sup> That said, there are numerous examples of other terms used interchangeably with subculture; indeed, a passage in a work produced by the Anti-Defamation League headed “The Skinhead Scene” also refers to skinheads as a “movement,” a “phenomenon,” “gangs,” and a

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<sup>9</sup> John Clarke, ‘The Skinheads & the Magical Recovery of Community’, in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds.), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*, London: Hutchinson, 1976, pp.99-105; Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style*, London: Routledge, 1979.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. John M. Cotter, ‘Sounds of Hate: White Power Rock and Roll and the Neo-Nazi skinhead subculture’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.11, 1999, pp.111-140; Brown, ‘Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and “Nazi Rock” in England and Germany’.

<sup>11</sup> Devin Burghart (ed.), *Soundtracks to the White Revolution: White Supremacist Assaults on Youth Music Subcultures*, Chicago: Center for New Community, 1999.



“way of life.”<sup>12</sup> This diversity of terms, alongside the lack of explanation of or engagement with what “subculture” means, suggests that the term is employed to assert the collective character of skinheads and that there are identifiable features which distinguish them as a distinctive group.

I use the term subculture in a similar way, to distinguish between the various groups associated with extreme-right ideology, such as skinheads, neo-Pagans and militia members, terms and affiliations which members are likely to apply to themselves. These could be described as sub-groups, but subculture communicates the importance of cultural factors to the construction of subcultural identity, with music, fashion, and even ideological nuance important to each subculture. I emphasise the plurality of these subcultures to highlight that there is no one unified, absolute incarnation of a particular subculture—particularly given the national variations outlined in Chapter One—and to emphasise the diversity that can be accommodated under the umbrella term “extreme right.”

“Scene” is a term which is also regularly applied to extreme-right groupings and has no absolute common usage, but it is generally applied when making particular reference to a specific musical culture. Thus, collections published by *Searchlight* specifically about music cultures are subtitled “Inside the International Nazi Skinhead Scene” and “Scenes of Extreme-Right Cultural Resistance.”<sup>13</sup> I use the term scene to refer to the components of the musical culture of the extreme right, not only the music itself, but the infrastructure and media which surrounds it: record labels, gigs, music magazines, music websites. Scene is similar to subculture in that music is an important aspect of subcultural belonging, but I make a distinction since involvement with and liking for certain aspects of a music scene do not necessarily entail identification with or membership of a particular subculture. Although it is divisible into “sub-scenes”—such as the skinhead music scene or the heavy metal

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<sup>12</sup> *The Skinhead International: A Worldwide Survey of neo-Nazi Skinheads*, New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1995, p.5.

<sup>13</sup> Nick Lowles and Steve Silver (eds.), *White Noise: Inside the International Nazi Skinhead Scene*, London: Searchlight, 1998; Shekhovtsov and Jackson, *White Power Music*.

scene—I generally use “scene” as an umbrella term, to incorporate all of the music (and its associated media and infrastructure) associated with the extreme right.

In the conclusion I discuss the ways in which music plays a role in constituting “community.” Clearly, the processes described also play a part in constituting subcultures and scenes, but I make a distinction because music can play a role in engendering a sense of community *beyond* these groupings. These processes need not take place within subcultures, nor can the community they constitute necessarily be regarded as a subculture or scene. Extreme-right music may play an important, even distinctive, role specific to subcultures and scenes, but that does not mean the same music cannot simultaneously play an important role in the imagining of a community beyond that subculture and scene. For example, music associated primarily with the skinhead subculture or the heavy metal scene can also be invoked as emblematic of the wider extreme-right community.

Finally, I use “identity” as something of an umbrella term to capture some of the most prominent traits that extreme-right music and ideology are concerned with, particularly in terms of gender, race, class, religion and politics, all significant in the construction of a dichotomy between belonging to “us” and identifying “them.” Identity is not fixed, but an ongoing process;<sup>14</sup> there is no absolute identity that is being uncovered in extreme-right music, rather music is playing an important role in constructing a collective identity for its listeners. Moreover, music plays a significant role in exposing what the extreme right sees as the crucial aspects of identity, how they ought to be articulated, and what their political significance is. This is particularly evident in the following chapters on race, class and gender, in which competing narratives vie for position as the proper articulation of extreme-right identity.

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<sup>14</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, London: Routledge, 1993; Simon Frith, ‘Music and Identity’, in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London: SAGE Publications, 1996, pp.108-127.

## Literature Review

There is an existing body of literature on extreme-right music, albeit small, which has been extremely helpful in the course of this work. There are two main reasons why this literature is often unsatisfactory, or at least insufficient. First, much of it dates from the 1990s, meaning that although it is helpful in understanding extreme-right music and its development, it is only characteristic of a particular historical moment. Second, much of this literature concentrates solely on the music most often associated with the skinhead subculture, that is, confrontational and explicit material, most often in a rock style. This focus, while representative of the dominant strand of the extreme-right music scene, is somewhat reductive in its assessment of the genres in use and of the tastes of extreme-right supporters.

Among the most important works in the gestation of this thesis is the edited collection *White Noise*,<sup>15</sup> which details the rise of extreme-right music in Britain, and its spread to Germany, Sweden, Poland and the USA. The book suffers for each of the reasons above, but it is also notable that it has almost nothing to say about the music itself, instead focusing on the individuals and organisations behind it. Even so, the chapters in the collection have been most helpful in providing an overall impression of the history and evolution of the extreme-right music scene up to the point of its publication.

The Anti-Defamation League, a civil rights group based in the USA, produced a survey of the neo-Nazi skinhead subculture in many countries around the world.<sup>16</sup> While again out of date, it provides an overview of the global skinhead subculture, with nation-specific details. Another edited collection from the United

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<sup>15</sup> Nick Lowles and Steve Silver (eds.), *White Noise: Inside the International Nazi Skinhead Scene*, London: Searchlight, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> *The Skinhead International: A Worldwide Survey of neo-Nazi Skinheads*, New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1995.

States, *Soundtracks to the White Revolution*,<sup>17</sup> provided useful details and contexts on various subjects, particularly in the chapters on metal.

While these works have been valuable in providing histories and contexts for extreme-right music, they are not scholarly works and as such do not engage with or analyse the musical products and culture of the extreme right in any meaningful way, instead providing an overview of the extreme-right scene and the individuals and groups behind it. Several academic articles have been published on extreme-right music, but they are too short to explore the subject in great depth, and are generally restricted to the “White Power” manifestation of the extreme right.

Among the more recent of these academic works is the analysis by Ugo Corte and Bob Edwards of how “White Power” music mobilises racist social movements,<sup>18</sup> particularly in cultivating a collective identity, but also in recruiting new followers and making financial gain. The article’s focus on youth is particularly distinctive and it contains useful interview material with supporters, though its limited length means its analysis must be somewhat cursory; it is perhaps for this reason that it is mostly restricted to American extreme-right music. However, as a concise introduction to extreme-right music it is perhaps unmatched.

An up-to-date assessment of the extreme-right music scene published during my studies, *White Power Music*,<sup>19</sup> contains information on the current scene in various European countries, as well as examining aspects such as issues of gender and censorship in extreme-right music. This work was particularly useful in providing recent information and context concerning the music scenes in Sweden and Germany.

Other significant work includes Futrell, Simi and Gottschalk’s analysis of how music allows extreme-right activists to cultivate a sense of local, translocal and

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<sup>17</sup> Devin Burghart (ed.), *Soundtracks to the White Revolution: White Supremacist Assaults on Youth Music Subcultures*, Chicago: Center for New Community, 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Corte and Edwards, ‘White Power music and the mobilization of racist social movements’.

<sup>19</sup> Shekhovtsov and Jackson, *White Power Music*.

virtual communities,<sup>20</sup> although their focus is mainly on how extreme-right communities use music and not on how music facilitates such uses; Timothy Brown's in-depth history of skinhead music (or, as he calls it, "Nazi Rock") in the United Kingdom and its adoption in Germany;<sup>21</sup> and Roger Sabin's chapter on punk's ambiguous relationship with racism which, although concerned predominantly with "mainstream" punk, has much useful information on racism within punk and why the genre had the potential to be appropriated by the extreme right.<sup>22</sup>

The relationship between extreme-right music and "whiteness" explored in Chapter Three is not unprecedented; Les Back includes a chapter on skinhead music in his and Vron Ware's collection of essays on various aspects of "whiteness" and its study.<sup>23</sup> However, while the rest of that book seeks to interrogate "whiteness" and establish parameters for its study, the chapter on "White Power Music" is more focused on the increasing use of the Internet by the extreme right and the possibilities that cyberspace has opened up, with whiteness essentially reduced to racism. In addition, there are a number of factual errors in Back's chapter which suggest that the engagement with the extreme-right music scene has been superficial at best: the more prominent of these are the crediting of Skrewdriver's 'The Snow Fell' to RaHoWa (who covered it), even though Skrewdriver are cited in detail as fundamental to extreme-right music; while the hoax symphony orchestra of the Ku Klux Klan—the work of notorious prankster Alan Abel—is cited as legitimate and evidence of elite taste within a certain strand of the extreme right.<sup>24</sup> Back does make some reference to distinctions made between "white" and "black" music, but he does not explore how this distinction is established, what purpose it serves, and the extent

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<sup>20</sup> Futrell, Simi and Gottschalk, 'Understanding Music in Movements'.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, 'Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics'.

<sup>22</sup> Roger Sabin, "'I won't let that Dago by': Rethinking punk and racism', in Sabin (ed.), *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, London: Routledge, 1999, pp.199-218.

<sup>23</sup> Vron Ware and Les Back, *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp.94-132.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., fn.62 p.115 & p.114.

to which it is predicated on mainstream tendency to label particular musics as “black.”

Along with the literature primarily concerned with the extreme right, it is appropriate to acknowledge Rosenthal and Flacks’s *Playing for Change*, which accounts for extreme-right music in its argument.<sup>25</sup> The authors do a fine job of analysing the way that music functions within political movements through a combination of case studies, interviews, and song analyses. However, at one point they claim that “Oi! music played a peripheral role in the skinhead movement in England where it was created, but a central role in the United States.”<sup>26</sup> This comment is puzzling since the most popular Oi! bands in Britain sustained their careers for many years and, particularly in the case of Skrewdriver, were esteemed as musical heroes of the extreme right in general. Such a statement suggests that while Rosenthal and Flacks’s analysis of how music functions in the context of political movements is highly useful in assessing the music culture of the extreme right, their sections on the extreme-right music scene itself are not necessarily the most reliable sources.

Finally, there is much work on the “modernised” extreme right in the realm of political theory which has been most useful to my research. This scholarly focus on party political manifestations of the extreme right means it does not concern itself with music, but it has been particularly useful in contextualising the processes and purposes of the “new” extreme right. Particularly valuable literature includes the essays on the new extreme right in the Western world,<sup>27</sup> Eatwell and Goodwin’s collection on the “new extremism” of the BNP (examined alongside the rise of

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<sup>25</sup> Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.200.

<sup>27</sup> Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, London: Routledge, 2004.

Islamic extremism)<sup>28</sup> and Jens Rydgren's work on Sweden.<sup>29</sup> The best of this work integrates empirical research and voter data with ideological and discourse analysis to portray both the "supply" and "demand" aspects of the extreme right, looking at how extreme right movements and parties develop, and how their rhetoric finds a sympathetic audience.

## Methodology

Early on in this research, it became clear that interviews and contact with musicians, politicians and supporters of the extreme right would not be feasible. Approaches to the British National Party were rebuffed due to the party's ban from campuses by the National Union of Students, and it was likely that given extreme-right hostility towards academia—perceived as part of the "liberal elite"—this would be a common response. Furthermore, the difficulties in communicating with German and Swedish activists (languages of which I have limited knowledge), as well as the practical challenges in locating activists across a range of countries—particularly given the secrecy with which extreme-right activities are generally carried out—meant that any ethnographic ambition would have prolonged this research beyond practicality.

Similar considerations precluded the possibility of attending gigs, perhaps the prime means of physical congregation for extreme-right activists. A particular obstacle was that in Britain, where I was based for the majority of this research, live concerts seem to have become more infrequent, and those that are staged are often restricted to an inside group to minimise the potential for anti-fascist disruption. However, it was possible to garner information on extreme-right gigs from both

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<sup>28</sup> Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin (eds.), *The New Extremism in 21st Century Britain*, London: Routledge, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Jens Rydgren, 'Is Extreme Right-wing Populism Contagious? Explaining the Emergence of a New Party Family', *European Journal of Political Research* Vol.44 No.3, 2005, pp.413-437; 'Sweden: The Scandinavian Exception', in Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (eds.), *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp.135-150; 'Radical Right-wing Populism in Denmark and Sweden: Explaining Party System Change and Stability', *SAIS Review* Vol.XXX No.1, Winter-Spring 2010, pp.57-71.

primary and secondary literary sources, as well as from concert footage and recordings.

While a lack of extreme-right contact was perhaps prudent in the context of my personal safety—given the threats against researchers, and the existence of websites dedicated to disseminating personal information about the extreme-right’s enemies<sup>30</sup>—I do not believe it detracted meaningfully from the progression of my research. This is because the media through which the extreme right communicate may be well hidden or marginalised, but they are not exclusive or invisible.

In my engagement with extreme-right cultures, I made a distinction between what might be referred to as “centralised” or official ideology, and devolved ideology or the ideology of the audience. In musical terms, this distinction is illustrated by musicians, producers and distributors in the former category, and fans in the latter; in political terms, political parties, groups, movements and significant individuals make up the former category, supporters and voters the latter. Clearly, these ideological categories cannot be considered as homogeneous, and it is often disagreements and schisms which reveal most about extreme-right culture, but they do entail different methodological processes in acquiring data.

Before the Internet, centralised ideology was disseminated mainly through the printed word; extreme-right supporters can be separated by large geographical distances, as well as being wary of the stigma associated with publicly declaring their political allegiance.<sup>31</sup> A primary method of connection in the extreme right, as well as party-specific propaganda, was through music magazines, which remained important for a significant period despite the potential of the Internet. As well as including band interviews and music reviews, these magazines often include explicit statements on ideological positions, as well as philosophical debates, often related to

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. the website ‘Redwatch’ ([www.redwatch.org](http://www.redwatch.org)), which publishes photographs and personal information of anti-fascist and “Marxist” individuals; see also Les Back’s comments on receiving hate messages after being criticised in the BNP’s *Spearhead* magazine in Vron Ware and Les Back, *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp.33-34.).

<sup>31</sup> Robert Futrell and Pete Simi, ‘Free Spaces, Collective Identity, and the Persistence of U.S. White Power Activism’, *Social Problems*, Vol.51 No.1, Feb 2004, pp.16-42.



music. I have used material from various magazines from each of the main countries studied: *Blood & Honour* magazine of Britain and Germany, *Nordland* of Sweden, and *Resistance* from the USA. Also useful are the magazines of anti-fascist organisations, particularly Britain's *Searchlight* and Sweden's *Expo*, which include information about and quotes from the extreme right. This information was fundamental to constructing an overall perspective of the extreme right.

The extreme right were early adopters of the Internet, using it for messageboards, information pages and forums. This has increased the transmission capabilities of centralised ideology (not only through the written word but also through Internet TV and Radio), and has also facilitated the creation of spaces for extreme-right supporters to come together and have their voice heard. Undoubtedly the most significant of the latter is the website Stormfront, founded by former Ku Klux Klan leader Don Black, a forum which, although based in the United States, has an international reach and membership. There are alternative forums often catering specifically to certain niches of extreme-right support; among the more significant is the Vanguard News Network Forum, which is particularly antagonistic towards Stormfront and the latter's policy of censoring racist language.

Online forums are perhaps the pre-eminent means of connection and communication among extreme-right supporters. As of 21st August 2013, Stormfront claims 272,378 members, as well as 49,923 "guest" visitors over the previous 24 hours (the site states that the highest number of guests online over a 24-hour period was 189,334), clearly a significant community. However, these statistics ought to be treated with caution, considering Stormfront undoubtedly has a substantial number of academics (myself included), anti-fascists and trolls amongst its membership,<sup>32</sup> while the remainder will not necessarily comprise of wholly indoctrinated supporters or regular site visitors. Nevertheless, websites such as this are a significant space for

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<sup>32</sup> An indication of the disparity between contributors and the curious is in the makeup of "Currently Active Users", of which 190 are members and 1,717 guests. *Stormfront*, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/>, accessed 21 Aug 2013.

extreme-right supporters to come together, network, socialise, debate and discuss topics they consider important.

I have registered with most of these websites in order to obtain more extensive access, but have refrained from posting. At times, particularly during extended trawls for data, I have been tempted to introduce topics and questions related to my research. However, I have maintained this silent approach as I have tried as far as possible to limit my analysis to subjects supporters feel important enough to instigate discussion about themselves.

The music itself has also been gathered mainly online. Some extreme-right music is available through conventional channels such as YouTube, while online sellers offer samples, and I have been fortunate enough to access the archives of the anti-fascist archive APABIZ. The most pervasive current method of distributing music, however, is through the sharing of .zip and .rar files through file-sharing websites. Not only is this method shared by many who listen to extreme-right music, it also gives an indication of relative popularity, as downloaders must “thank” posters for music, which results in a list of thankers, and thus an indication of how desirable or popular certain music is. This indication is invaluable, particularly since there are no sales figures for extreme-right music in circulation, the closest thing being lists of top sellers on merchandisers’ websites. The free availability of extreme-right music has been the subject of debate between supporters: since this is primarily a “message” music, many advocate its free distribution; others argue that downloading is “a form of communism,”<sup>33</sup> taking money away from the extreme-right cause. Even so, the Internet has allowed comprehensive access to extreme-right music (including scans of album sleeves and the CDs themselves) for those who know where to look.

Lyrics are undoubtedly more important in extreme-right music than in many other forms of popular music: often, this music is valued for its message first and its aesthetic second. While this research shows that aesthetic, particularly in terms of

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<sup>33</sup> ‘Black Metal Compilation’, *Stormfront*, created 23 Oct 2006, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t335981-2/>, accessed 21 Aug 2013.

performance style and genre, carries its own important message, lyrics have been a prime resource for my understanding of extreme-right music. The value of lyrics in extreme-right music is clearly recognised; it is rare to find music released without the lyrics in an accompanying booklet, and there are a number of websites which aggregate them as well. While I have used these booklets and websites in my transcription of lyrics, I have always checked texts by listening to the music.

Clearly, recognition of the particular significance of lyrics to extreme-right music does not eradicate the difficulties associated with analysing lyrics. It is of course problematic to assume that any form of communication has a single absolute meaning, and that this is what listeners will perceive. In addition, even in a scene such as this which places such an emphasis on lyrics, it does not follow that all listeners will value, or even comprehend, lyrics to the same extent; this is particularly true in genres such as National Socialist Black Metal, in which vocal delivery can consist of incomprehensible shouts.

I agree with Walser when he states that “verbal means are only a fraction of whatever it is that makes musicians and fans respond to and care about popular music,”<sup>34</sup> and for this reason I devote attention to non-verbal qualities of the music, such as timbre, rhythm, harmony, melody, and instrumentation. In particular, I have sought to explore the contexts and histories which reveal how aesthetics and genres develop and how they come to be seen as in keeping with extreme-right ideology. As well as this analysis of musical components and their interpretation, I have included analysis of artwork connected to music, both in album artwork and in magazines and online. It is interesting to note that album artwork frequently takes the form of illustrations rather than photographs, allowing for freer and more idealistic representations and reflections of ideology.

Through these processes, I have sought to investigate the musical products of the extreme right, as well as the various discourses surrounding this music. Music is

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993, p.26.

not only used to indoctrinate and recruit—although this process, and its importance to the extreme right, does arise throughout the text—but also plays a role in constructing and reflecting extreme-right ideology. Through this investigation, it becomes clear that extreme-right music is crucial not only in appealing, even pandering, to certain notions of identity, it also plays a significant role in constructing such identities.



**Chapter One:**  
**What “Extreme Right” Means and Who It Describes:**  
**Context, Definitions and Histories**

*“In the final days of our story;  
Before the night falls for the last time;  
We're marching out on the fields of glory;  
We have one last chance to let the sun shine.”*

Brutal Attack, ‘Fields of Glory’, *When Odin Calls*, Destiny Records, 1998.

*“We are a Sweden-friendly party that seeks a high level of community and belonging in society. We wish for a warmer society where people feel safe and caring by taking responsibility for each other. The community is a prerequisite for jointly-financed welfare policies, low crime and a functioning labour market.”<sup>1</sup>*

Sweden Democrats, ‘Vår politik’ (‘Our Policies’),  
<http://sverigedemokraterna.se/var-politik/>, accessed 9 Dec 2013.

*“We, the Members, in exercise of our inherent freedom of association, freedom of thought, freedom of belief, freedom of opinion, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom to hold private property and freedom of agreement, have come into association....”*

Article 2.1 of the BNP constitution (edition 12.3), 2011, p.5.

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<sup>1</sup> “Vi är ett Sverigevänligt parti som eftersträvar en hög grad av gemenskap och samhörighet i samhället. Vi önskar oss ett varmare samhälle där människor känner trygghet och visar omtanke genom att ta ansvar för varandra. En förutsättning för en gemensamt finansierad välfärdspolitik, låg brottslighet och en fungerande arbetsmarknad är den gemenskapen.”

This chapter sets out the contexts in which extreme-right music has developed. Any research into the extreme right, particularly with an international scope, has to contend with the ambiguity of what “extreme right” represents. Therefore, before setting out the historical context of extreme-right music in the countries under study, it is important to outline what I mean by “extreme right,” and to explore other terms often applied to extreme-right groups in order to gain a fuller understanding of the ideology and origins of the contemporary extreme-right political family. I refer to groups which work against the extreme right—such as the British magazine *Searchlight* or Sweden’s *Expo*, or more generally to protestors who mobilise against the extreme right—as “anti-fascist” as this is how they generally refer to themselves. In addition, when I quote from external sources I do not alter their preferred term, so terms such as “radical right” and “fascist” occur in the text.<sup>2</sup>

It is essential to adopt a sufficiently wide definition of extreme-right music in order to include all the relevant material. Most extreme-right music has come from the skinhead subculture, or from groups with explicitly neo-Nazi ideologies, and this is reflected in the existing literature on the topic. However, this narrow focus means that certain developments have gone unrecognised, such as the musical activities of the BNP since around 2000, or the musical ideology of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik. My broader definition of the extreme right allows for these musics and ideologies to be considered together, rather than as seemingly disparate phenomena.

The chapter goes on to examine the political and musical contexts of the extreme right in Great Britain, Germany, Sweden and the United States. As outlined below, these countries have been the most significant producers of extreme-right music, but the significant variations between them make it difficult to generalise about the extreme right as an international phenomenon. Even so, the extreme-right music scene does have international dimensions, but these are modified according to

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<sup>2</sup> In addition, I follow the practice of capitalising Fascism in the context of particular political parties and governments (e.g. Italian Fascism; British Fascism) and leaving it lower-case when referring to the broader ideology and usage of the term.

national circumstances; this is demonstrated through a comparison of the effect of censorship on extreme-right music and its distribution in each of these countries.

### **Fascism, Nazism**

When George Orwell engaged with the question “What is Fascism?”<sup>3</sup> he suggested that the “average thinking person” would point to the Italian and German regimes, but thought this unsatisfactory due to the differences between them in structure and ideology. Orwell’s essay, published in 1944, argued that while Fascism as applied to Japan, Germany or Italy was generally understood, it had lost its meaning in domestic politics. Orwell showed that the term was readily applied in print to Conservatives, Socialists, Communists, Trotskyists, Catholics, war resisters, supporters of the war and nationalists, and verbally to “farmers, shopkeepers, Social Credit, corporal punishment, fox-hunting, bull-fighting, the 1922 Committee, the 1941 Committee, Kipling, Gandhi, Chiang Kai-Shek, homosexuality, Priestley’s broadcasts, Youth Hostels, astrology, women, dogs and I do not know what else.” Despite this ambiguity, Orwell did see three underlying meanings to fascism: a difference between fascist and democratic regimes; if taken to mean “in sympathy with Hitler” a certain logic to some of its application; and thirdly, an emotional significance on the part of the user. This latter meaning feeds into “fascist” as a term of abuse; Orwell references it again in a 1946 essay in which he states that fascism is meaningless other than to describe “something not desirable.”<sup>4</sup>

The use of “fascist” or “Nazi” as terms of abuse is still common, and has contributed to making the terms relatively meaningless. Despite the fact that both Italian Fascism and German Nazism drew on aspects of left- as well as right-wing ideology, they are generally associated with the right and particularly with

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<sup>3</sup> George Orwell, ‘What is Fascism?’, *Tribune*, 1944.

<sup>4</sup> George Orwell, ‘Politics and the English Language’ [1946], in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume IV: In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968, p.161.



authoritarianism and totalitarianism.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, they have been used in a number of contexts to suit a variety of arguments. For example, conservative columnist Jonah Goldberg claims in his book *Liberal Fascism* that fascism is actually a product of the left, and that contemporary liberal politics, and American society, are fascist. Goldberg draws comparisons between fascism and identity politics in an attempt to prove his point, ignoring inconsistencies and the basis of fascism in ideas of nation and race rather than class.

In contrast to Goldberg's thesis, fascism is not a precursor of the modern left any more than the mainstream right is fascism's successor; rather, fascism drew on some political and intellectual ideas that would influence the contemporary left, as well as some which would form the right. The terms "extreme right" and "far right" are therefore somewhat misleading as they imply the ultimate end on the left-right continuum; rather, these ideologies incorporate aspects from both sides of the left-right divide.

Goldberg's work is in part predicated on the "empty signifier" nature of fascism. This is reflected in the lack of academic consensus over what "fascism" actually describes. Roger Griffin's definition of fascism as palingenetic ultranationalism—predicated on a myth of the coming rebirth of the nation, itself based on the land of an ethnic people—has gained some consensus as the "fascist minimum."<sup>6</sup> Other commonly cited features of fascism are its nature as a byproduct of modernity,<sup>7</sup> its view of the world in terms of nations rather than classes, and its authoritarian or totalitarian nature. Fascism was also depicted as a crusade rather than merely a political ideology, with the goal of perfecting the nation through the cleansing of "evil" aspects.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Authoritarianism and totalitarianism are concepts that are, of course, not restricted to the right of the political spectrum, but these aspects are considered crucial in differentiating Fascism and Nazism from other political ideologies of the right.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.8.

Fascism arose in Italy; as well as being the home of the first fascist regime, the very word is Italian.<sup>9</sup> The differences between the Italian Fascist and German Nazi regimes highlight the geographically specific nature of Fascism. This was acknowledged by Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, which was inspired mainly by Mussolini:

Fascism was in essence a national creed, and therefore by definition took an entirely different form in different countries. In origin, it was an explosion against intolerable conditions, against remediable wrongs which the old world had failed to remedy. It was a movement to secure national renaissance by people who felt themselves threatened with decline into decadence and death and were determined to live, and live greatly.<sup>10</sup>

Fascism depended on there being a strong sense of nationalism in order to present the populace with enemies, both within and without, and the idea that the nation could be “purified” if cleansed of these enemies. While German fascist ideology was concerned with race, and therefore able to make enemies out of “Others” such as the Jews, Italian Fascism did not originally attribute much significance to ideas of racial purity.

The Italian model was based around “nation-statism” and “organic” nationalism, an ideology which believed in “(1) an enduring national character, soul, or spirit, distinguishable from that of other nations, (2) their [nationalists’] right to a state that would ultimately express this, and (3) their [nationalists’] right to exclude minorities with different characters, who would only weaken the nation.”<sup>11</sup> Clearly, the latter component could incorporate racism and ethnic discrimination, but in the early years of Fascism was more likely to target communists, socialists and anti-Fascists. Racism towards “people of colour” was commonplace, but arguably no more so than in other European countries, while, in contrast to Nazi Germany, anti-Semitism was so marginal to Fascism that Jews held prominent positions in the

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<sup>9</sup> From “fascio,” a tied bundle of sticks, “used then to describe any small, tight-knit political group” (Mann, *Fascists*, p.93). There is no political meaning inherent in the word (other than a reference to maximising force, perhaps), a legacy of definitional ambiguity that continues to the present.

<sup>10</sup> Oswald Mosley, *My Life*, London: Thomas Nelson, 1968, p.287.

<sup>11</sup> Mann, *Fascists*, p.34.

Italian government. Mussolini only adopted racial laws in 1936 (fourteen years after coming to power), and more substantially with the “racial laws” of 1938, as a reaction to a perceived faltering in the Fascist revolution and in anticipation of colonial projects in Libya and Ethiopia, as well as in deference to the growing influence of Nazi Germany over Italian politics.<sup>12</sup>

Nazism developed as a variant of fascism, but it has particular features which distinguish it from the Italian model. While Mussolini’s Italy emphasised the state, Nazism advocated a particular kind of nationalism, emphasising the importance of race and incorporating anti-semitism as a prime component. This difference was acknowledged by Mussolini himself, who did not agree with racial distinctions, saying: “Race! It is a feeling, not a reality; ninety-five per cent, at least, is a feeling. Nothing will ever make me believe that biologically pure races can be shown to exist today.... National pride has no need of the delirium of race.”<sup>13</sup> Such ambiguities mean that when extreme-right politics is described in racial terms, it is more sensible to speak of it in terms of Nazism than fascism. In addition, the ideology of racial cleansing—which has been commonly advocated in certain sections of the extreme right throughout the post-war period—clearly has its roots in Nazi genocide.

Obviously, these ideologies were hugely influential on the modern extreme right, and it is possible to trace the histories of many contemporary parties and movements back to fascist or Nazi roots. It is therefore unsurprising that some scholars describe contemporary movements and groups as fascist;<sup>14</sup> however, it is more often restricted to describing political parties of the inter-war period, no doubt because of the problematic definitional complexities of the term. What this makes

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander J. De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: The ‘fascist’ style of rule*, Second Edition, London: Routledge, 2004, pp.70-74. Italian intellectuals of the time believed that Italy was a creative mixture of peoples, and that environmental factors were more important than race. Mussolini is said to have backed away from biological racism by 1939, while De Grand also contrasts the execution of racial policies: in Germany, such policies had broad enough support to result in significant consequences, while in Italy there was a distinct lack of popular support (Ibid., p.74).

<sup>13</sup> James Drennan, *B.U.F.: Oswald Mosley and British Fascism*, London: John Murray, 1934, p.221.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1995.

clear is that—even if Nazism is considered an offshoot of fascism, rather than a discrete ideology—fascism itself refers to something more specific and localised, both geographically and temporally, than the political family described by the term “extreme right.”

### **Neo-Fascists, Neo-Nazis**

Working from their historical predecessors, the extreme right are often described as neo-Fascist or neo-Nazi. However, as argued above, Fascism and Nazism are best used to describe the regimes of Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany specifically. Therefore, these neologisms refer only to those who admire or seek to emulate the ideologies of Mussolini or Hitler. Certainly neo-Fascists and neo-Nazis do exist, but, just as their forerunners were not the only political movements of the extreme right, they are merely a component in a much wider and diverse extreme right today. Neo-Nazism is a strong and influential ideology within the extreme right, but it is not alone and, certainly in a political sense, it is seen by some on the extreme right as a barrier to recruitment and the advancement of their ideas. Therefore, when I refer to neo-Nazis I am referring specifically to those who adhere to the ideology of National Socialism, often displaying this through reverence for Adolf Hitler and use of Nazi symbolism such as the swastika. Neo-Fascists, on the other hand, are not a significant component of the modern extreme right in the countries studied and are not referred to in the text.

### **Populism**

In their introduction to *Twenty-First Century Populism*, Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell argue that Western Europe has been “the main area of sustained populist growth and success over the last fifteen years in established democracies.”<sup>15</sup>

The ability of populist parties to achieve electoral success is attributed to a number of

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<sup>15</sup> Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, ‘Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre’ in Albertazzi and McDonnell (eds.), *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, p.1.

factors, including “economic and cultural globalization, the speed and direction of European integration, immigration, the decline of ideologies and class politics, exposure of elite corruption, etc.”<sup>16</sup>

The idea of elitism is crucial to populism, a phenomenon which is thought to be the result of mass disillusionment with the political process: Albertazzi and McDonnell define populism as “an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous ‘others’ who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice.”<sup>17</sup> Although this definition is reminiscent of a crucial component of traditional extreme-right ideology, which claims that the interests of a nation (Fascist Italy) or race (Nazi Germany) are under threat from elites and Others, Albertazzi and McDonnell note that populism need not always equate with the right, let alone the extreme right, of the political spectrum. Sabrina Ramet asserts that extreme-right politics is fundamentally populist in character,<sup>18</sup> but even if this is accepted it does not mean that the converse is true, that populism is inherently extreme-rightist.

Contemporary populism can appear to have originated with the successes of individuals such as Jean-Marie Le Pen in France and Jörg Haider in Austria, and therefore to be tied to the extreme right. However, not only is populism best described as a style rather than an ideology, it is available to all members of the political spectrum. The use of “populism” as a pejorative term between mainstream parties indicates that it is a tactic used, or perceived to be used, by non-extremist parties. Populism as ideology is generally applied to describe parties that use it continually and base the identity of their movement on it; even in these cases, it is

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>18</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, ‘Defining the Radical Right: Values and Behaviors of Organized Intolerance in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe’, in Ramet (ed.), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, p.16.

rare to find it in isolation, and it is usually qualified, such as in describing Scandinavian parties as “radical-right populist.”

Given the nature of populism as presenting itself as “authentic,” and in defining the political establishment as elite and out of touch, populists cast themselves as voices of the ordinary folk. Musical manifestations of this are considered in Chapter Four.

### **Extreme Right**

As I have made clear, I prefer the term “extreme right.” Before considering the benefits and drawbacks of the term, it is worth setting out what it means here. I define extreme-right ideology as intrinsically reactionary; it is an ideology which points to the perceived degeneration of a society, community or nation, and blames this degeneration on contamination by Others. The form of this contamination can be biological (as in white supremacism), social (as in the rejection of multiculturalism) or economic (the taking of jobs from the “indigenous” population by cheap immigrant labour).

As these examples imply, the Othering process usually targets immigrants who embody a wide range of imagined flaws. However, the success and appeal of extreme-right parties is just as dependent on the changes wrought on socioeconomic circumstances by globalisation: by identifying itself as the politics of “tradition,” extreme-right ideology frequently presents itself as in opposition to socio-economic and socio-structural change. Hans-Georg Betz argues that extreme-right politics frequently owes its appeal to “intense economic and financial pressure,” particularly when real incomes fall, the gap between rich and poor widens and unemployment increases. Betz asserts that these circumstances engender increased uncertainty, anxiety, insecurity and pessimism, leading to a decline in public faith and trust in “the established parties, politicians, and the political process in general.”<sup>19</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, ‘Introduction’, in Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*. New York: St Martin’s Press, 1998, pp.6-8.

declining standing of mainstream politicians—their identification as an elite with no conception of the day-to-day life of “ordinary” people—is a common theme of extreme-right rhetoric, encouraging the view of the political classes as remote and out of touch. Other political parties are blamed for allowing, even encouraging, immigration, which is felt to make the life of the “ordinary” people even harder.

What distinguishes the extreme right particularly from the left in this context is the theory of Lipset and Raab, summarised here by James Alfred Aho:

The distinguishing mark of right-wing [extremist] movements is their preservative backlash character. Right-wingers look nostalgically on the (sometimes imaginary) past, whereas left-wing groups look hopefully to an often equally fanciful future.<sup>20</sup>

Arguably, the left is just as likely to use the past as the basis for its imagined future, but restorative rhetoric is most associated with the right, particularly the extreme right. The desire to return to an idealised past often takes the form of returning to the past’s “purer” state; so immigration, the liberalisation of sexuality and the decline of religiosity are all blamed for the degeneration of society. Sabrina Ramet suggests that to return to these traditional values, the extreme right wish to impose their will on others, where the mainstream right seek to persuade: “Whether they call their values ‘patriotism’ or ‘family values’ or ‘the Christian way of life,’ right-wing extremists believe that they are justified in using any means at their disposal in their quest to impose their views on society, including murder, arson, and the corruption of the democratic process.”<sup>21</sup> For Ramet, compromise is never more than a tactical manoeuvre for the extreme right.<sup>22</sup>

Other prominent features of extreme-right ideology are its strong nationalism (which can manifest in different ways) and its bitter enmity towards socialist and communist politics. Further features are common, but not universal. For example, extreme-right parties tend to be populist, particularly in contemporary politics.

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<sup>20</sup> James Alfred Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism*, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1990, p.213.

<sup>21</sup> Ramet, ‘Defining the Radical Right’, p.19.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

Extreme-right groups tend to be overwhelmingly patriarchal and masculine, in group hierarchy, membership, and voter support. Anti-Semitism is frequently equated with extreme-right ideology, but this is not necessarily typical, and many extreme-right movements emphatically distance themselves from it. More recently, Islamophobia has become a significant component of extreme-right rhetoric, particularly in Europe, though this is relatively recent, based on waves of Islamic immigration and Islamic terrorism.

While there is something of a consensus as to what “extreme right” describes, there is some doubt as to whether it is an apt descriptor. It is not a term which parties and movements use to describe themselves, preferring terms with more positive and unifying connotations, such as “patriotic” and “democratic.”<sup>23</sup> The use of “extreme” is seen by some as a herald that the groups must necessarily engage in violence<sup>24</sup> or operate outside the democratic process. This is clearly not the case for all those described as “extreme”; rather, the term is best understood as a referential marker for these movements in the context of “mainstream” politics:

[T]he word “extreme” has two primary meanings: a party can be extreme relative to the existing political system or relative to other parties in the same party system. Extremism in the former meaning (rejection of the existing political system) is hardly applicable here. Very few, if any, contemporary parties are in principle opposed to the existing democratic system, and have any plans, explicit or hidden, to fundamentally change it.... Extremism relative to other parties, however, is more relevant. Understood this way, extremism means that a party is at or near the end of an ideological dimension, at a clear distance from the other parties.<sup>25</sup>

“Extreme” here need not only refer to the distance of political parties from others, but also to the “pariah status” conferred upon them by mainstream parties, examples

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<sup>23</sup> Paul Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Summarised in Roger Eatwell, ‘Introduction: the new extreme right challenge’, Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, London & New York: Routledge, 2004, p.8.

<sup>25</sup> Anders Widfeldt, ‘A fourth phase of the extreme right? Nordic immigration-critical parties in a comparative context’, NORDEUROPAforum, 2010, <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/nordeuropaforum/2010-1/widfeldt-anders-7/XML/>.



being the treatment of the Sverigedemokraterna in the Swedish Riksdag or the reception of the British National Party.

The placing of the extreme right on the *right* of the political spectrum is also contested. In economic terms, the extreme right are often overtly hostile to established capitalism and, like Fascism and Nazism, draw on some of the same ideology as the left. However, this is generally of secondary importance in the ideological programme of the extreme right: “an extreme right party is a party which prioritises the socio-cultural dimension, is far to the right on that dimension and is significantly different from other parties on that dimension.”<sup>26</sup> When non-political manifestations of the extreme-right engage with economics, it is often in the context of other aspects of their ideology, such as highlighting supposed Jewish control of world finance, or blaming the political establishment for financial misery. Combined with Lipset and Raab’s distinction of the right as nostalgically striving to restore the imagined harmony of the past, this situates the extreme right most properly on the right.

### **Far Right, Radical Right**

Use and meaning of the term “extreme right” are not universally accepted, and other terms are used to describe the ideology, particularly “far right” and “radical right.” “Far right” is not commonly found in academic literature; it is more likely to be used to describe the furthest right in mainstream political parties, such as the Conservative Monday Club, and is widely used in the media. “Radical right” is a term especially favoured by American academics,<sup>27</sup> and is also commonly used in Germany following its definition there by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, which has the power to ban parties if they are perceived to be hostile to the State.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Roger Eatwell, ‘Introduction’, *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, p.7.

<sup>28</sup> Pippa Norris, *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in Electoral Markets*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.46.

However, the use of radical right to describe what is more commonly known as the “New Right,” the politics of Thatcherism and Reaganism, has destroyed the clarity of the term.<sup>29</sup> While I find these terms to be less satisfactory than “extreme right,” it is important to acknowledge their use by others in this field.

### **The Big Four**

As outlined in the Introduction, the main focus of this study is the use of music by the extreme right in Germany, Great Britain, Sweden and the United States, which I argue have been the most significant in this field. This is evident in terms of quantity: there are a number of sources which attempt to compile extreme-right bands by country, and although the results vary, these four countries are usually the top four.<sup>30</sup> These countries have also produced bands that are the most influential, as those described below have achieved canonic status in the extreme right. Labels and distributors such as Rock-O-Rama, Nordland, and Resistance Records have had true international significance, although British bands have tended to look abroad for production and distribution. This hints at the financial importance of each of these countries as well.

The circumstances that have fostered extreme-right music are unique in each country, but there is some common ground which might, in part, account for their significance. One notable feature of the countries other than Germany is that they did not experience Nazi occupation. Such a commonality is clearly complex, particularly as neutral Sweden had a very ambiguous role of antagonism and cooperation with the Nazi regime,<sup>31</sup> and in Britain and the USA national identity has become bound up in part with the narrative of overcoming Nazism. But the fact remains, none were ever technically *invaded* by Nazi armies, no matter how significant the traumas of

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<sup>29</sup> Roger Eatwell, ‘Introduction’, *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, p.7.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. ‘Bigots Who Rock: an ADL List of Hate Music Groups’, *Anti-Defamation League*, n.d., [http://www.adl.org/extremism/bands/bands\\_country.asp](http://www.adl.org/extremism/bands/bands_country.asp), accessed 1 Jun 2012.

<sup>31</sup> See Christian Leitz, *Nazi Germany and Neutral Europe During the Second World War*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

war otherwise were for these countries. While the effect of this on national identities and ideologies is complex, it did have notable consequences in terms of censorship.

While the legacy of Nazism in Germany—including post-war denazification processes in both East and West—resulted in laws against neo-Nazi parties and the use of Nazi symbolism, this was not a priority in non-occupied countries. Occupied states developed laws against Holocaust denial, revisionism and the spread of Nazi propaganda, but similar steps were not taken in unoccupied countries.<sup>32</sup> It is only recently, with the development of hate speech laws, that a degree of consensus has emerged over state reaction to extremism, although the extent and application of these laws are not uniform. It is important to note that the primacy of the First Amendment in the United States has placed the preservation of free speech above any legislation against hate speech, and I am not aware of any action being brought against extreme-right musicians in the USA on the basis of their music. In Germany, there have been many raids against producers and distributors of extreme-right music, while some of the most prominent musicians have been imprisoned.

As the nation-specific histories below demonstrate, there has been little political space in these four key countries for extreme-right parties to operate in. This is in stark contrast to much of the Western world, where parties have influenced governments as part of formal and informal coalitions—such as the FPÖ in Austria under Jörg Haider, or Geert Wilders' PVV in the Netherlands—or provided significant opposition to government—such as the French Front National under Jean-Marie Le Pen and now his daughter, Marine. The democracies in Britain and Sweden have been presented as exceptions to the rise of the extreme right, although this has more to do with electoral systems, infighting and incompetence than with a lack of extreme-right sympathy in the electorate; indeed, signs are strong in both Britain and

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<sup>32</sup> 'Sverige störst i världen på nazirock', *Expo* No.6 1996, reproduced at [http://expo.se/2003/sverige-storst-i-varlden-pa-nazirock\\_232.html](http://expo.se/2003/sverige-storst-i-varlden-pa-nazirock_232.html), accessed 1 Jun 2012.

Sweden that there is widespread support for the policies of the extreme right, though lesser support for the parties themselves.<sup>33</sup>

In Germany, extreme-right parties have found it difficult to function due to anti-Nazi and anti-hate-speech laws in force there; some political parties have been forced to close down, while the most successful extreme-right party, the NPD, has been placed under observation by the German domestic intelligence agency as it is deemed to be “a threat to the constitutional order.”<sup>34</sup> As such, extreme-right political parties in Germany have found it difficult to gain much momentum, while the music scene, which was particularly neo-Nazi and confrontational, has essentially been outlawed, with many musicians in prison and distribution reduced to bootlegs or the often illegal importation of albums produced in other countries.

In the United States, the two-party system has effectively precluded the possibility of an insurgent party breaking into the American political landscape. This has left the American extreme right with a choice between violent extremism and attempting to influence the mainstream parties. It has mostly attempted the former, with explicitly neo-Nazi or Ku Klux Klan groups advocating racial hatred and foretelling racial war; such rhetoric has led to surges in militia group membership, occasionally resulting in tragedies such as the Waco Siege. It should not be forgotten that before the September 11th attacks, the greatest terrorist threat to the United States was considered to come from the extreme right, exemplified by the Oklahoma Bomber, Timothy McVeigh.

The terrorist threat in the United States is very much contemporary, with numerous attempts such as the 2011 Spokane bombing incident having explicit links to the extreme right.<sup>35</sup> This threat is mirrored in each of the other countries. In

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin. ‘Angry White Men: Individual and Contextual Predictors of Support for the British National Party.’ *Political Studies*, Vol.58 (2010), pp.1-25.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Austrian “neo-Nazi” joins NPD’s executive committee,’ *Austrian Times*, 4 August 2009, <http://www.austriantimes.at/index.php?id=12379>, accessed 1 Aug 2011.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Terror from the Right’, *Southern Poverty Law Center*, [n.d.] <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/terror-from-the-right>, accessed 18 Jul 2012.

Britain, many planned attacks have been foiled, though in 1999 the nail-bomber David Copeland succeeded in killing three and injuring 139; in 2011 the German parliament passed a motion expressing “deep shame” that a neo-Nazi terror cell was able to commit ten murders—known in the media as the “Döner Murders”—and fourteen bank robberies over a period of thirteen years;<sup>36</sup> while in Sweden, “lone-wolf” terrorists such as John Ausonius and Peter Mangs have targeted immigrants in shootings. The continuing and recurrent threat of terrorism in these countries implies that extreme-right movements have mainly seen activism as taking place outside the democratic arena, which might in part explain the effort devoted to making and producing music in these countries.

Another significant feature is that to a certain extent each of these countries claims to be—or is seen as—the originator of some particular aspect of extreme-right politics. The establishment of the extreme-right musical culture in Britain, and particularly the influence of Skrewdriver, means it is often cited as the spiritual home of extreme-right music. The Nordic preoccupation of these countries (see below) is often exhibited in the proclamation of Sweden, and to a lesser extent Germany, as the home of the true white race. Germany is also hugely significant in neo-Nazi circles, where the history of Hitler and Nazism means that it is seen as the Fatherland. In the United States, the long history of racial politics—from slavery through the Ku Klux Klan to segregation—has given the country precedence in racialised politics, while it is also seen as having the potential to be established as a truly “white” country. This explains in part the way in which ostensibly national projects have taken on international dimensions.

Another important feature of these four countries, but which is not universal to all extreme-right groups within them, is a shared sense of Nordic identity, at times expressed as Germanic or Anglo-Saxon, but presumed to be held in common across this geographical space. Even in America, where white immigration occurred from

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<sup>36</sup> Helen Pidd, ‘German parliament “ashamed” by neo-Nazi murders’, *The Guardian*, 22 Nov 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/22/german-parliament-shame-neo-nazi-murders>, accessed 21 Jun 2012.

all over Europe, extreme-right activism has generally been the preserve of white Protestants who identify as primarily Anglo-Saxon.

This Nordic identity is significant as it can engender a sense of shared heritage between extreme-right activists in these countries, particularly evident in the revival of Norse Pagan beliefs under the banner of Odinism or Wotanism. There is also a lingering sense of superiority, such as manifested in Nazi Aryan ideology. This is shown in the belittling of groups which are seen as insufficiently white, particularly Slavic and Mediterranean peoples, although they are easily incorporated when it is perceived to be advantageous. “Improperly white” can also at times be linked to religious beliefs, with Protestantism probably the most significant Christian denomination associated with the extreme right, although this is not absolute. The particular appeal of this Nordic identity is explored in Chapter Six.

### **Great Britain**

In a political context, Britain is claimed as an exception to the appeals of the extreme right. Its electoral system prevents insurgent parties from becoming major political forces quickly. However, Britain—or, more specifically, England—is the birthplace of extreme-right music in its current form. Extreme-right music has existed in other historical contexts, notably Nazi Germany and throughout the history of the United States (see below), but the origin, organisation and style of the current scene stems from Britain in the late 1970s. The history of the extreme right can be traced at least as far back as the interwar period, particularly to the leader of the British Union of Fascists, Oswald Mosley; but the overt politicisation of the second wave of skinhead culture and the concurrent rise of the National Front (NF) as an electoral force is a discrete phenomenon quite separate from the “gentlemanly” fascism of Mosley and the minorities of neo-Nazis in the immediate postwar period.

Skinhead culture originated in working-class districts of London in the mid-to late-1960s.<sup>37</sup> Skinheads drew on the style and music of Jamaican “rude boys,” listening mainly to ska and reggae. The skinheads were characterised not only by the cropped hair which gave them their nickname, but also by their “uniform” of Doc Marten boots, Levi jeans, and Ben Sherman or Fred Perry shirts, clothing brands known for their association with the working-class.<sup>38</sup> Skinhead culture at this point was not exclusively white; there were black skinheads too.<sup>39</sup> But while skinheads were not racially homogeneous, and as a subculture were appropriating aspects of Jamaican culture, they were notorious for their racist attitudes, particularly the practice of “Paki-bashing”:

Skinheads’ concern with a particular, collective, masculine self conception [involved] an identification of masculinity with physical toughness, and an unwillingness to back down in the face of “trouble.” Paki-bashing involved the ritual and aggressive defence of the social and cultural homogeneity of the community against its most obviously scapegoated outsiders—partly because of their peculiar visibility within the neighbourhood (in terms of shop ownership patterns, etc.) by comparison with West Indians, and also because of their different cultural patterns (especially in terms of their unwillingness to defend themselves and so on)—again by comparison with West Indian youth.<sup>40</sup>

The first wave of skinhead culture had fragmented by the early 1970s.<sup>41</sup> With the coming of punk, there was a skinhead revival, and the subculture became entangled with the punk subgenre known as Oi!. Most famously typified by the band Sham 69, Oi! music consisted of loud and simple songs that were easy to sing—or shout—along with. It celebrated a “peculiarly violent version of male working-class

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<sup>37</sup> Les Back, ‘Voices of Hate, Sounds of Hybridity: Black Music and the Complexities of Racism’, *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol.20 No.2, Autumn 2000, p.130.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.; also Burkhard Schröder, *Nazis sind Pop*, Berlin: ESPRESSO Verlag, 2000, pp.48-9.

<sup>39</sup> Back, ‘Voices of Hate’, pp.133-4.

<sup>40</sup> John Clarke, ‘The Skinheads & the Magical Recovery of Community’, in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds.), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*, London: Hutchinson, 1976, pp.101-2.

<sup>41</sup> Nick Lowles and Steve Silver, ‘From Skinhead to Bonehead—The Roots of Skinhead Culture’, in Lowles and Silver (eds.), *White Noise: inside the international nazi skinhead scene*. London: Searchlight, 1998, p.3.

culture,”<sup>42</sup> at the same time presenting itself as the authentic sound of working-class or “street” culture in contrast to the “artful” style of punk. At this stage skinheads and Oi!, although considered unsavoury by many, did not yet have firm associations with extreme-right politics. Indeed, Sham 69 took a stand against racism by performing for Rock Against Racism.

Rock Against Racism (RAR) was launched in 1976 to combat what its founders saw as increasing racial tension in Britain. In August of that year, Eric Clapton launched into a drunken, on-stage tirade against immigration, which included the statement:

We are a white country.... I think Enoch’s [Powell] right ... we should send them all back. Throw the wogs out! Keep Britain white!<sup>43</sup>

In the same year David Bowie was quoted in a number of publications saying that Britain could benefit from a fascist leader, and that Adolf Hitler was the first rock star. The NME also published a photo they claimed showed Bowie giving the Nazi salute. With the goal of challenging racist attitudes, RAR served as a symbol for decentralised grassroots activism, but was also capable of staging huge concerts around the country. While these were cited as the factors that inspired the founders of RAR, their primary target was the National Front (NF).

The NF was formed in reaction to a perceived liberalisation of the Conservative Party, especially on its policy towards immigrants and their integration, after the 1966 general election. The NF brought together a number of extreme-right groups such as the League of Empire Loyalists, the 1960s incarnation of the British National Party (BNP), and a smattering of smaller like-minded groups.

The NF was built around a core policy of closing British borders to immigration, and the compulsory repatriation of non-European immigrants already in

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<sup>42</sup> Simon Frith and John Street, ‘Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music’ in Reebee Garofalo (ed.), *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass music and mass movements*. Boston: South End Press, 1992, p.77.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in John Street, *Rebel Rock: The politics of popular music*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, pp. 74-5. Unlike Bowie, Clapton never apologised or distanced himself from these comments, even reiterating his respect for Powell while denying he was a racist in a TV interview (*The South Bank Show*, ITV, 2 Dec 2007).



the country. The NF was seemingly condoned by a speech made in 1968 by a senior member of the Conservative Party, Enoch Powell, which would later be known as the “Rivers of Blood” speech. In it, Powell said of the current policy on immigration:

We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre ... As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see “the River Tiber foaming with much blood.”<sup>44</sup>

The NF offered Powell’s speech, along with the race riots that Britain had experienced, as evidence that immigration would inevitably lead to all out race-war.

The NF gained momentum following the mass immigration of ethnic Asians from Uganda, expelled by the dictator Idi Amin in 1972. The subsequent racial tension led to some minor electoral success and a conviction within the party that the NF was on the verge of a major breakthrough. However, despite putting up 303 candidates for the 1979 general election, the party attracted just over 1% of the vote.<sup>45</sup> It is often suggested that the NF became almost redundant following a hardening of the Conservative Party’s policy on immigration under Margaret Thatcher, with the pluralist nature of British politics making it quite possible to hold opinions compatible with the NF on the right of the Conservative Party. Despite attempting to broaden its policies to encompass more than just immigration,<sup>46</sup> the NF was unable to regain its earlier momentum and descended into infighting and factionalism.<sup>47</sup>

Advocates of RAR contend that it was crucial in combating racist tensions and attitudes in Britain in the late 1970s, and contributed substantially to the collapse

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Martin Walker, *The National Front*, London: Fontana, 1977, p.88.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Eatwell, ‘The BNP and the Problem of Legitimacy’ in Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998, p.144.

<sup>46</sup> Particularly focusing on Ulster, trade unions, Europe and post-immigration. See Walker, *The National Front*, p.153.

<sup>47</sup> For a summary of the infighting history of the National Front until just before Tyndall’s departure, see Walker, *The National Front*.

of the National Front.<sup>48</sup> It is important to note that non-musical histories of this time cite many reasons for the collapse of the National Front, and do not attribute any direct significance to RAR. While RAR therefore functioned mainly as a symbol, with many events occurring on the initiative of decentralised activists, it was powerful enough to stage huge outdoor events, reportedly attracting 100,000 people to a march and music festival in London in 1978, while 25,000 attended a carnival in Manchester in the same year. The bands that took part in these events included some of the most commercially successful of the time, such as the Clash, the Buzzcocks, Stiff Little Fingers, Sham 69, Steel Pulse and Elvis Costello.

The deliberate decision to use punk and reggae bands ensured that these genres came to be associated with left-wing ideology (in part due to RAR's association with the Socialist Workers Party). RAR also sought to appeal to skinheads by hosting Oi! band Sham 69, which David Renton argues helped grab the genre "out of the hands of the white racists."<sup>49</sup> Certainly, Sham 69 were a prominent band in RAR, but what Renton omits is that Sham 69 were forced to split up by the racist element of their fan-base, which repeatedly broke up their gigs with eruptions of violence.<sup>50</sup> The forced break-up of a flagship RAR band by racist elements in its fan-base hardly portrays the success of RAR, and also undermines the claim that RAR was able to appeal to the skinhead audience through Oi! bands.

While the experience of Sham 69 demonstrates the racist and violent tendencies of most skinheads, it was the NF that harnessed this into an established counterculture. Rock Against Communism (RAC) was the first attempt to bring together politically sympathetic bands, and, as the name suggests, was also intended as a riposte to Rock Against Racism. RAC was led by Joe Pearce, a senior figure in

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<sup>48</sup> David Widgery, *Beating Time: Riot 'n' Race 'n' Rock 'n' Roll*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1986; David Renton, *This Rough Game: Fascism and Anti-Fascism*, Thrupp, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> Renton, *This Rough Game*, p.185.

<sup>50</sup> It is worth emphasising that not all skinheads are racist: S.H.A.R.P.s (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) are the most organised, and are bitter enemies of the racist skinheads.

the Young National Front (YNF) and editor of its paper, *Bulldog*, who planned to expand RAC to include its own record label and recording studio to help entice bands to the circuit. The first event was held in August 1978, and attracted around 150 youths. Although they did not all play at this first concert, several bands were already associated with the scene, including Damaged, Phase One, Beyond the Implod, Homicide, The Raw Boys, The Ventz and The Dentists.<sup>51</sup> RAC's early success is demonstrated by the then-NF leader John Tyndall claiming that an increasingly high proportion of new recruits were young people, and by a marked increase of gig-disruption, particularly of gigs arranged by RAR.<sup>52</sup>

It was in 1981 that Skrewdriver—often cited as the founders of right-wing rock music<sup>53</sup>—reunited and aligned themselves explicitly with the NF. Consisting of frontman and songwriter Ian Stuart Donaldson (who often went by the name Ian Stuart) and an ever-changing assortment of other musicians, Skrewdriver had initially tried to break through in the punk scene in 1977, before shaving their heads and actively courting a skinhead following. Their original disbandment was a result of pressure over apparently unfounded allegations about their political sympathies. In 1979, *Searchlight* printed a retraction after reporting Skrewdriver's involvement with RAC, stating that the band had been approached but had turned the NF down,<sup>54</sup> although this was the year that Donaldson joined the NF.<sup>55</sup>

In 1981 Skrewdriver reformed, and in 1983 they released the single 'White Power' (backed by 'Smash the IRA') on the NF's White Noise label, which was hugely successful and is still one of the anthems of the extreme-right music scene.

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<sup>51</sup> *Searchlight*, No.52 1979, p.19.

<sup>52</sup> *Searchlight*, No.57 1980, p.7 & No.59 May 1980, p.11.

<sup>53</sup>Robert Futrell, Pete Simi and Simon Gottschalk, 'Understanding Music in Movements: The White Power Music Scene' in *The Sociological Quarterly*, No.47 2006, p.282; Timothy S. Brown, 'Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and "Nazi Rock" in England and Germany' in *Journal of Social History*, Vol.38 No.1 Autumn 2004, pp.163-4.

<sup>54</sup> *Searchlight* No.54 1979, p.13.

<sup>55</sup>Joe Pearce, *Skrewdriver—The First Ten Years—The Way It's Got To Be!* London: Skrewdriver Services, 1987, Chapter Two.

The record's success in Europe showed the potential, and Donaldson negotiated to release his music on the West-German-based Rock-O-Rama label rather than with the NF. A number of British bands followed in Skrewdriver's footsteps, with some of the more popular such as Brutal Attack, Combat 84 and Skullhead also releasing through Rock-O-Rama. Many early releases of extreme-right music on Rock-O-Rama were in collaboration with the NF's White Noise, and it is likely that the arrangement with Rock-O-Rama was originally intended to exploit the potential of extreme-right music on the continent.<sup>56</sup> It also became clear that, in contrast to the NF, Rock-O-Rama was reliable in paying royalties,<sup>57</sup> particularly notable given that many extreme-right labels were financially untrustworthy as well as prone to collapse.

Although this music scene quickly established itself as financially lucrative and useful for engendering a sense of community among skinheads, it was not a harmonious arrangement; the NF was rapidly declining and the extreme-right music scene was its main source of income. The party's dependence on this income meant that little of the money made was seen by musicians.<sup>58</sup> The discontent this engendered culminated in Donaldson splitting with the NF and, along with prominent skinhead Nicky Crane, setting up Blood & Honour (B&H). It is interesting to note that the French label Rebelles Européens, which was devoted to extreme-right music, was established in 1987—the same year as Blood & Honour—and released a number of albums by prominent extreme-right bands, although Skrewdriver remained with Rock-O-Rama.

Like the Skrewdriver album of 1985, B&H was named after a motto of the Hitler-Jugend, becoming commonly referred to by the code "28," referring to the position in the alphabet of its initials. Although ostensibly just a publication, B&H united various activists, bands and fans in a common organisation, and avoided the

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<sup>56</sup> Pearce, *Skrewdriver—The First Ten Years*, Chapter Six.

<sup>57</sup> *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004, V.

<sup>58</sup> Steve Silver, 'Blood and Honour 1987–1992', in Lowles and Silver, *White Noise*, p.10.

splits that plagued the extreme right by not explicitly supporting a particular political party. The group stated its aim in its manifesto:

BLOOD & HONOUR IS:

1 An independant [sic] National Socialist movement supporting all active N.S./ Nationalist parties/groups in the White world.

2 A magazine promoting N.S. ideals, N.S. music, be it rock, oi, metal, etc.

3 A cog ina [sic] movement that has divisions in most countries including USA, Canada, Germany, France, Scandanavea [sic], Russia etc.

4 A no compromising stand against all we consider corrupt.

OUR AIMS:

1 To unite White youth.

2 To promote White Power through positive ideals and a positive message.

3 To create units in every city in every town in every country.

4 To promote our culture, our traditions.

5 To help any worthy political organisation either financially or with manpower on the streets.

6 To win our nations back, once and for all.

88/14 <sup>59</sup>

B&H thus presented itself as the “independent” voice of RAC, and was a success in terms of circulation and the number of concerts it arranged. As well as regional divisions, groups were set up in different countries to the point where B&H could legitimately be described as an international nazi-music network.

Despite Donaldson’s intention to keep it independent, after his death in 1993 B&H transferred to the control of violent neo-nazi organisation Combat 18 (C18). Donaldson’s death in a car crash made him an instant martyr figure (see Chapter Six), with ISD Records quickly set up by C18 to cash in on his name. C18 used ISD records and B&H to fund their organisation, cooperating on an international level through the pooling of resources and material. However, their control of B&H was not to everyone’s satisfaction, and led to a violent feud, with splits among B&H and C18.<sup>60</sup> The effects of this are still evident, with a number of live websites trading on the B&H name denouncing one another as traitors. A number of arrests and splinter groups also weakened C18, although they remained in control of ISD records.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Blood & Honour* (Britain) Issue 9, n.d., p.3. The numbers 88/14 are frequently used as signatures by the extreme right, 88 standing for HH and Heil Hitler, while 14 refers to the 14 Words originating with David Lane: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White Children.”

<sup>60</sup> *Searchlight*, No.251, May 1996, pp.6-7.

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.isdrecords.com/>, accessed 5 May 2012.

Donaldson's death, and the infighting which followed, effectively crippled the British branch of extreme-right music. Attendances at gigs, already relatively low in a European context, were now noteworthy if they approached 200. While Britain was home to the most influential bands, such as Brutal Attack, No Remorse and Skullhead, most were products of the boom in the 1980s and early 1990s. The scene still functions, with the British version of Blood & Honour still in production, and many of the different factions made public declarations of newfound "unity" through the publication.<sup>62</sup> However, the British wing of extreme-right music has diminished significantly, and is now far less important in an international context than the countries explored below.

The modern version of the British National Party (BNP) was founded in 1982 essentially as a variation of the National Front, having been set up by those who had lost out in a power struggle in the NF. Although it didn't have any official links with Blood & Honour, the party's progress was regularly and favourably featured in Blood & Honour magazine, while bands played benefit concerts for the BNP. The products of skinhead bands were also advertised in the BNP magazine, *Spearhead*. The BNP advocated the NF policies of ending immigration and forcing repatriation of foreigners, and used the same tactics of street marches as a show of strength. Other than the election of a councillor in the London borough of Tower Hamlets—following a successful "Rights for Whites" campaign—the early BNP was insignificant as an electoral force.

This changed in 1999 when Nick Griffin took control of the party. Griffin engaged in the process of "modernising" the BNP, bringing it into line with successful European parties like Le Pen's Front National. As well as softening party policies and distancing the BNP from violent strategies and tactics, this involved re-situating music within the party's cultural policy. The BNP established its own festival, in which music played a prominent part, and its own label, Great White

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<sup>62</sup> Editorial, *Blood & Honour* (Britain), Issue 15 n.d., p.1.

Records. Although the label seems to have been financially unsuccessful<sup>63</sup> and the festival has ceased in the face of local hostility, these endeavours, along with the attempt of the BNP to appropriate folk music, show a shift in the tactics of the BNP, aiming to distance themselves from the electoral poison of skinhead associations towards something more accessible (see Chapter Seven on “softening” in extreme-right music).

Politically, Griffin’s leadership brought about a turn in the fortunes of the BNP. Party membership doubled in the two years to 2002, and the party polled significantly in some local elections in that year, with a number of councillors elected.<sup>64</sup> In 2006, the BNP more than doubled its councillors in England—to 46—and became the second party in the Barking and Dagenham ward, and in 2008 Richard Barnbrook was elected to the London Assembly. But it was when Griffin and Andrew Brons were elected to the European Parliament in 2009 that the party made its most significant gain, leading to extensive media coverage and a guaranteed source of income.

This success led to raised hopes for the 2010 general election, despite the first-past-the-post voting system which made the BNP extremely unlikely to succeed. Putting up a record 338 candidates, the party won no seats and lost most of its sitting councillors. Griffin announced he would step down as leader in 2013<sup>65</sup> but still faced three (unsuccessful) leadership challenges following the election, including from Barnbrook, who subsequently left the party. The following year, Griffin was

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<sup>63</sup> Great White Records has been dissolved twice, but it is difficult to be certain if it was unsustainable in itself or simply caught up in the general economic woes of the BNP, a result of the various legal actions brought against the party.

<sup>64</sup> Roger Eatwell, ‘The extreme right in Britain: The long road to “modernization”’, in Eatwell and Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, London & New York: Routledge, 2004, p.71 & p.62.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Nick Griffin says he will quit as BNP leader by 2013’, *BBC News*, 24 May 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8700333.stm>, accessed 1 Jun 2012. Despite Griffin’s pledge, he is still BNP leader as of January 2014, and no plans for a leadership contest have been announced.

challenged by Brons, only retaining the leadership by nine of the 2,305 votes cast.<sup>66</sup> The failure to gain a general election breakthrough and the subsequent infighting—highly reminiscent of the NF—means the BNP are currently of little significance, with some observers declaring them finished as an electoral force.<sup>67</sup> The party lost one of its two MEPs when Brons left the party in October 2012, claiming that 90% of members and activists had already done so,<sup>68</sup> while Griffin was declared bankrupt in early 2014, leading to predictions that Britain would become “BNP-free” after the next European elections.<sup>69</sup> The BNP have also largely been overshadowed by the rise of the UK Independence Party, a Eurosceptic party which has benefited from protest voting, in part because it has less stigma attached to it than the BNP.

The collapse of the BNP gave some momentum to the street movement English Defence League (EDL), which had been formed in 2009.<sup>70</sup> Evolving particularly from anti-Islamic protests and the football “casual” subculture, the EDL has denied any links to extreme-right politics and views itself as an anti-Islamic movement. The EDL’s ideology is therefore fairly narrow, but it has demonstrable links to the extreme right, notably its agreement of cooperation with the BNP offshoot the British Freedom Party.<sup>71</sup> While the EDL is still relatively young and it is unclear which direction it will take, it has taken steps to form an international

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<sup>66</sup> ‘Party Leadership Election Result: Nick Griffin re-elected Party Chairman’, BNP website, 25 Jul 2011, <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/party-leadership-election-result-nick-griffin-re-elected-party-chairman>, accessed 1 Aug 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Matthew Goodwin, ‘The BNP is finished as an electoral force’, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/may/04/bnp-local-elections-electoral-force-finished>, accessed 1 Jun 2012.

<sup>68</sup> Ben Quinn, ‘BNP divisions exposed as Andrew Brons resigns’, *The Guardian*, 16 Oct 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/oct/16/bnp-andrew-brons-resigns-mep>, accessed 6 Jan 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Rowena Mason and Matthew Taylor, ‘Bankruptcy of Nick Griffin deals further blow to British National Party’, *The Guardian*, 3 Jan 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/03/bankruptcy-nick-griffin-blow-bnp>, accessed 6 Jan 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Scottish and Welsh Defence Leagues have been established, but it is the English branch that has been most visible.

<sup>71</sup> Kevin Rawlinson, ‘English Defence League prepares to storm local elections’, *The Independent* Nov 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/english-defence-league-prepares-to-storm-local-elections-6267740.html>, accessed 15 Jun 2012.



“counter-Jihad” movement<sup>72</sup> and looks likely to be the main outlet for British extreme-right sentiment in the near future. Alex and the Bandits have taken on the title of “official” EDL band, but the decentralised nature of the EDL means that activists tend to share their own musical tastes rather than follow explicitly extreme-right bands.<sup>73</sup>

## **Germany**

After the end of World War II, the Allied occupiers of Germany embarked on denazification processes designed to purge German society and politics of any remaining National Socialist sympathy, including taking German civilians around concentration camps, and, most prominently, the Nuremberg Trials. This carried through to the constitution of West Germany, which had passages specifically designed to combat any return of Nazism, particularly the clause banning non-democratic parties. East Germany, meanwhile, presented itself as the true antithesis to Nazism. These circumstances have made it nigh-on impossible for the extreme right to establish itself politically in Germany, although there have been notable attempts. Since Germany is unique among the four countries I focus on, in that it was partitioned at the time extreme-right music came to prominence and has since been reunified, it seems prudent to divide the following discussion into sections on West Germany, East Germany, and reunited Germany.

## **West Germany**

In 1951, the West German Bundesverfassungsgericht (Federal Constitutional Court)—the body intended to safeguard the liberal democratic constitution—was established.<sup>74</sup> One of the roles of this court (which retains its place in reunified

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<sup>72</sup> Nigel Copsey, *The English Defence League: Challenging Our Country and Our Values of Social Inclusion, Fairness and Equality*, London: Faith Matters, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Hilary Pilkington, personal communication, 20 Sep 2012.

<sup>74</sup> Taylor Cole, ‘The West German Federal Constitution Court: An Evaluation After Six Years’, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol.20 Iss.2, May 1958, pp.278-307.

Germany) is to act against political parties which are seeking to undermine the free democratic institutions of Germany. Only two parties have been dissolved by the court: the openly Nazi—in both ideology and membership—Sozialistische Reichspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Reich Party, SRP), founded in 1949 and capable of gaining up to 11% of the vote in regional elections, was banned in 1952, and the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany) in 1956. The perception of the NPD (see below) as a threat to democracy saw the party tried by the court in 2003, although the case was dismissed after it was found that members of the party, including at leadership level, were in fact agents of the state.<sup>75</sup> While banning is evidently uncommon, the potential threat means that extreme-right parties in West and reunified Germany were/are less likely to advocate extremist platforms, particularly alternatives to democratic processes.

The SRP was merely one of many nationalist and extreme-right parties that fought elections in the immediate postwar period, often with former Nazis featuring prominently in their ranks, although the threat of banning encouraged a more moderate approach. As well as regional successes, some of these parties even managed to achieve representation in the Bundestag.<sup>76</sup> This fringe had collapsed by the early 1960s, but in 1964 the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party of Germany, NPD) was formed from the remnants of several of these groups. The party gained much momentum in regional elections throughout the 1960s and was by far the largest extreme-right organisation up to this point.<sup>77</sup> The NPD's rise led to fears that it would enter parliament in 1969, but it just missed the required 5% threshold. This failure led to schisms within the party, and

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<sup>75</sup> John Hooper, 'German court rejects attempt to ban neo-Nazi party', *The Guardian*, 19 Mar 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/19/thefarright.germany>, accessed 8 Nov 2013. Another banning attempt was filed before the court by the Bundesrat, the upper house of parliament, but was not supported by the government. Melissa Eddy, 'Berlin Won't Join Effort to Ban Far-Right Party', *New York Times*, 20 Mar 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/21/world/europe/merkels-government-wont-pursue-ban-of-german-far-right-party.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/21/world/europe/merkels-government-wont-pursue-ban-of-german-far-right-party.html?_r=0), accessed 8 Nov 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Eatwell, *Fascism*, pp.220-222.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.223.

the NPD's increasing association with violence and shift to a more identifiably Nazi-influenced ideology meant that it would not be a significant force until after German reunification, at which time its significance would not only be party political, but also musical.

Gerhard Frey, a publisher who had founded the weekly newspaper *Deutsche National-Zeitung* in the 1950s, created the Deutsche Volksunion (German People's Union, DVU) in 1971. Frey's influence through his publication, which in the 1980s had a circulation approaching 100,000,<sup>78</sup> was initially used in rivalry with the NPD, but in 1987 the parties made an alliance which saw some regional gains. However, expectations were not met and the parties separated in 1990, although they were to come to another non-competition agreement after the turn of the century.<sup>79</sup>

Die Republikaner (The Republicans, REP) was founded in 1983 by defectors from the Christlich-Soziale Union (Christian Social Union) which, along with its sister party Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democrat Union), is one of the two main conservative parties in Germany. As such, its roots lie more in conservative politics than in the extreme right; the REP have rejected attempts by the NPD and DVU to join in electoral alliance. Even so, the party has been described by the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, BfV) as possessing extreme-right tendencies, particularly in its emphasis on nationalism and hostility towards immigrants. The BfV started monitoring the REP in 1992, though stopped monitoring it in 2006, apparently as it was no longer considered "extreme." The major successes of the REP were in 1986, with the party achieving some regional representation, but it has suffered following

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<sup>78</sup> Eatwell, *Fascism*, p.227.

<sup>79</sup> Jürgen R. Winkler and Siegfried Schumann, 'Radical Right-Wing Parties in Contemporary Germany', in Betz and Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right*, p.97.

reunification for a variety of reasons, entering a decline punctuated by occasional successes at individual state level.<sup>80</sup>

Just as in the other countries analysed in this chapter, then, extreme-right political parties in West Germany found it difficult to establish themselves democratically; as in the other countries, music became a more significant locus for extreme-right ideology. While the party political extreme right in West Germany can be traced to Nazism, the skinhead culture which used music to transmit extreme-right ideology was, according to Timothy S. Brown, brought to the country by British soldiers during the punk era, establishing itself fully around 1980/1.<sup>81</sup> The growing significance of skinheads during the 1980s in both Germanys was due to the influence of the British NF and as such was heavily infused with the associated musical culture. Before this, extreme-right parties had attempted—with little success—to engage youth through marching and folk songs in the vein of National Socialism, in spite of the huge cultural changes brought about by jazz and rock.<sup>82</sup> Although Michael Weiss states that skinheads already had a right-wing image,<sup>83</sup> Barber-Kersovan argues that, just as in Britain, West German Oi! lacked political significance at first, in fact marked by its hatred of any kind of politics.<sup>84</sup>

This is evident in the early career of the Frankfurt band Böhse Onkelz (a play on Böse Onkels, meaning Wicked Uncles). Formed as a punk band, Böhse Onkelz never openly advocated extreme-right politics outside of their music, claiming to be

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<sup>80</sup> These reasons include a decline in importance in the eyes of voters of issues such as housing policy and immigration following reunification and, perhaps more significantly, internal power struggles. Winkler and Schumann, pp.97-8.

<sup>81</sup> Timothy S. Brown, 'Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics', p.161.

<sup>82</sup> Christian Dornbusch and Jan Raabe, 'Einleitung', in Dornbusch and Raabe (eds.), *RechtsRock: Bestandsaufnahme und Gegenstrategien*. Hamburg/Münster: reihe antifaschistischer texte/UNRAST-Verlag, 2002, pp.9-10.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Weiss, 'Begleitmusik zu Mord und Totschlag: Rechtsrock in Deutschland' [Incidental music for murder and manslaughter: Right-Wing Rock in Germany], in *White Noise: Rechts-Rock, Skinhead-Musik, Blood & Honour—Eiblicke in die internationale Neonazi-Musik-Szene*. reihe antifaschistischer texte/UNRAST-Verlag Hamburg/Münster 2000, p.65.

<sup>84</sup> Alenka Barber-Kersovan, 'German Nazi Bands: Between Provocation and Repression', in Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (eds.), *Policing Pop*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003, p. 187.

more interested in football than politics.<sup>85</sup> But Böhse Onkelz complemented the politicisation of Oi! in the subject matter of their early work, particularly the songs ‘Türken Raus’ (‘Turks out’) and ‘Deutschland den Deutschen’ (‘Germany for the Germans’). These songs were never officially released, rather being spread on bootlegged demos, but the band encountered further controversy with the release of their debut album, *Der nette Mann* (The Nice Man) in 1984, which was banned outright in 1986 for its “pornographic, nationalistic and violent tendencies.”<sup>86</sup>

Although this ban contributed to the band’s reputation, there is some ambiguity as to whether they were part of the extreme-right ideology. In the song ‘Deutschland’ (*Der nette Mann*, Rock-O-Rama, 1984) the band declare “Also twelve dark years in your history; Does not void our bond with you,” referring to the years of Nazism as “dark” in a way which would not conform to extreme-right ideology.<sup>87</sup> The band explicitly dissociated themselves from extreme-right politics, leaving the Rock-O-Rama label which had distributed their early releases as it gained a reputation for extreme-right politics. Despite the suggestive titles of the above (unreleased) songs, Böhse Onkelz never associated themselves with extreme-right politics and emphatically denied any such association; even so, their influence is significant. Timothy S. Brown believes that Böhse Onkelz “became a point of articulation between the concepts ‘skinhead’ and ‘right-wing,’ communicating the basic elements of skinhead identity to a wide audience while linking them to a nationalist (German) message.”<sup>88</sup> The band were, therefore, particularly significant in providing a specifically German model for extreme-right skinhead culture to rally round, even if the band disavowed such ideology.

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<sup>85</sup> Barber-Kersovan, ‘German Nazi Bands’, p.187.

<sup>86</sup> “... pornographischer, nationalsozialistischer und gewalttätiger Tendenzen.” ‘Die Gesichte der Böhsen Onkelz’, *Böhse Onkelz Club*, [http://www.boc-ghc.de/history\\_boehse\\_onkelz.php](http://www.boc-ghc.de/history_boehse_onkelz.php), accessed 5 May 2012.

<sup>87</sup> “Auch zwölf dunkle Jahre in deiner Geschichte; macht unsre Verbundenheit mit dir nicht zunichte”.

<sup>88</sup> Timothy S. Brown, ‘Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics’, p.166.

Böhse Onkelz' first label, Rock-O-Rama, quickly cornered the market for extreme-right music, not just in West Germany but internationally, particularly through the release of Skrewdriver albums. Although the label's founder, Herbert Egoldt, was apparently not of extreme-right persuasion, he saw the financial potential in this music that no mainstream label would touch.<sup>89</sup> Other domestic labels, such as Düsseldorf's Funny Sounds, became significant along with the distributor Creative Zeiten-Vertrieb.<sup>90</sup> Given the amount of music produced by the West German industry, as well as the trend of bands such as Skrewdriver touring West Germany, then either the anti-Nazi laws which applied to political parties did not apply to music, or they were simply not enforced, with police raids likely to be motivated by other activity, such as violent crime. It has been difficult to find any firm evidence regarding the attitude of the West German state towards this music, but it seems that the threat of extreme-right movements was not taken seriously until at least a few years after reunification—with government attention directed towards the extreme left rather than the extreme right—and little effort was made to censor them.

The West German movement, and later that of reunified Germany, was better organised than many of its counterparts, and its record labels were amongst the most significant in Europe. Because of this, it was capable of producing professional-quality publications beyond the resources of many other movements, such as the glossy *Rock Nord*, which also ran as a record label, or the German-language version of Blood & Honour which produced magazines far longer than its British counterpart. The Blood & Honour division established in West Germany, avoiding the schisms which afflicted their British counterpart, effectively marshalled the skinhead scene for many years.

The recruitment of West German skinheads was seen as crucial by the existing extremist organisations in Germany. Michael Kühnen, founder of the

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<sup>89</sup> Eike Wunderlich, 'German White Power—A Programme for Cultural Hegemony' in Nick Lowles and Steve Silver (eds.), *White Noise: inside the international skinhead scene*, London: Searchlight, 1998, p.51.

<sup>90</sup> Eike Wunderlich, 'German White Power', p.51.

Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten (National Socialist Action Front) and one of the most significant figures of the West German extreme right until his death in 1991, was of the opinion that skinheads “could be good soldiers,” but not necessarily “useful citizens” (“brauchbaren Menschen”).<sup>91</sup> Peter Dehoust, chief editor of the SS-founded political magazine *Nation und Europa*, wrote:

We now have a generation whose appearance and behaviour does not fit into the image which national Germans have of their offspring ... we must accept these young Germans who do not conform. Our task is to win them for the entire race and to show them the way.<sup>92</sup>

Skinheads thus came to be of great importance to the extreme-right cause in West Germany, establishing a thriving musical culture and becoming energetic activists in extreme-right politics.

### **East Germany**

The regime in East Germany pretended that the problem of right-wing extremism solely affected the West, but, although it was not facing an electoral challenge, the East German regime had to contend with its own extreme-right problem, most notably with the trial of alleged neo-Nazis throughout the 1960s and 1970s, often resulting in expulsion to the West. These political groups, with names such as “Nazi Punks,” “Nazi Heavys” and “National Resistance” appeared more often towards the end of the 1970s,<sup>93</sup> and the East German skinhead scene was a popular enough youth subculture to be placed under constant observation by the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry for State Security).<sup>94</sup> The Eastern skinhead scene was in communication with its Western counterparts from at least 1988, establishing links that were to be fully realised upon reunification.

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<sup>91</sup> Michael Weiss, ‘Begleitmusik zu Mord und Totschlag’, p.65.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Eike Wunderlich, ‘German White Power’, p.50.

<sup>93</sup> Sabrina Ramet, ‘The Radical Right in Germany’, in Ramet (ed.), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, p.70.

<sup>94</sup> Barber-Kersovan, ‘German Nazi Bands’, p.188.

It has been said that the skinhead cultures in the two Germanys evolved along similar lines,<sup>95</sup> although the Eastern movement had more at stake in choosing right over left:

In the West, being far left and being far right was equally dissident. In the East, where the establishment itself was far left, youths had to orient themselves toward the far right in order to rebel politically. Moreover, whereas in the West flirting with far-right ideology can be seen as primarily a subcultural pose, skinhead slogans like 'Smash Communism' had a more explicitly political meaning in the East.<sup>96</sup>

As the above quote suggests, the skinhead subculture in the East was less likely to be solely an aesthetic consideration (even if rebellion was possible, and enacted, through embracing variations of left-wing ideology). Violence became an increasingly significant pastime for East German skinheads, rising five-fold between 1983 and 1988.<sup>97</sup>

As suggested by the relative lengths of the sections on East and West Germany, the extreme right in East Germany did not create a culture that would be dominant following reunification. Put simply, the lack of political space under the Communist regime precluded any possibility of political parties establishing themselves, while state repression and censorship—as well as the difficulty in establishing links with established extreme-right musical cultures in Western Europe—made it difficult for a distinctively East German extreme-right music to develop. However, one highly significant feature of the East German skinhead subculture was the high proportion of adherents. Statistics produced in 1992 by the German intelligence services in the wake of reunification placed the militant right-wing extremist (predominantly skinhead) population of the Western states at 2,600 compared to 3,800 in the Eastern states, and 3,000 in the West and 2,600 in the East in 1993.<sup>98</sup> Given that at the time of reunification the population of West Germany

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<sup>95</sup> Timothy S. Brown, 'Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics', p.168.

<sup>96</sup> Barber-Kersovan, 'German Nazi Bands', p.188.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.71 & p.70.

<sup>98</sup> Cited in Anti-Defamation League, *The Skinhead International*, New York: ADL, 1995, p.43.



was around four times that of East Germany, these numbers indicate a significant new market for the extreme-right political parties and musical culture of the West. However, the variation in these statistics over a year implies their unreliability, while the freedom of movement between the former states means they cannot easily be applied to the pre-unification states. Even so, they suggest a substantial population of extreme-right supporters in East Germany, and given that the statistics are restricted to *militant* activists, it can be assumed that the potential audience was much larger. The growing significance of extreme-right movements following reunification lends weight to this interpretation.

### **Reunited Germany**

Upon reunification in 1990, the activities of right-wing extremists increased and became a priority for the German state, as Sabrina Ramet explains:

During the entire era of German division, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was always more concerned about left-wing extremists than about the right—the Baader-Meinhof gang being a case in point. The reunification of Germany changed this balance, and 1991 was the first year since World War II in which extremists on the right outnumbered those on the left in the FRG. At that time, there were an estimated 40,000 right-wing extremists in the country, as opposed to only 26,500 left-wing extremists. In 1997, there were about 45,300 radical right extremists in Germany and about 35,000 left-wing extremists, according to official estimates. Skinheads accounted for only about 4,000 of these (in 1993), although there were also about an equal number of left-wing skinheads... As of March 1997, there were about fifty far-right groups operating in the Federal Republic.<sup>99</sup>

The increase in the number of extremists was accompanied by an increase in racist violence, with notable incidents including the “pogroms” in Hoyerswerda in 1991 and Rostock-Lichtenhagen in 1992, arson attacks in Mölln and Solingen in 1992 and 1993 respectively, and the Magdeburg riot of 1994. The German government has often downplayed the significance of these, claiming them to be the result of directionless and disorganised youth; Eike Wunderlich cites the example of a neo-Nazi attack on a campsite in 1997 reported as the work of “fifty individual attackers”

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<sup>99</sup> Sabrina Ramet, ‘The Radical Right in Germany’, pp.67-8.

rather than as a politically motivated and organised act.<sup>100</sup> *Die Zeit* reported that there had been 149 deaths due to racist violence between 1990 and 2010, many more than the Federal Government's statistic of 63.<sup>101</sup> Music has been cited as playing a role in some of these deaths, as in the case of the attackers of Omar Ben Noui singing Landser songs beforehand, or the motivating role of the bands Sturmwehr and Kraftschlag during the fatal assault on Mozambican Alberto Adriano.<sup>102</sup>

In its 2009 report on Germany, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance notes "that music from the extreme right-wing scene continues to act as a vector for spreading racist, antisemitic and xenophobic ideas,"<sup>103</sup> confirming that extreme-right music is at least as important to German racists now as in the late 1980s. Many of the most significant extreme-right German bands—such as Noie Werte (1987), Störkraft (c.1988), Kraftschlag (1989), Macht und Ehre (1991), Oithanasie (1991), Landser (1992), and Sturmwehr (c.1993)<sup>104</sup>—came from the period immediately before or after reunification. Drawing on a strong network of publication, distribution and activist organisation, the German scene established itself as a main reference point in the extreme-right scene, and the country was a valuable touring destination for other bands, such as Skrewdriver, Ultima Thule and Midgård's Söner.

While the British scene collapsed due to internal conflict and the Swedish gradually diminished in importance, the German scene has supported many bands over a long period, and has seen vast expansion beyond its skinhead origins. The musicians and activists are no longer best classified solely as skinheads, with other

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<sup>100</sup> Eike Wunderlich, 'German White Power', p.56.

<sup>101</sup> Johannes Radke, 'Rechte Gewalt: Eine furchtbare Bilanz', *Die Zeit*, 30 May 2010, <http://www.zeit.de/2010/38/Rechte-Gewalt>, accessed 15 Nov 2010.

<sup>102</sup> Suzette Bronkhorst and Ronald Eissens (eds.), *Hate on the Net: Virtual nursery for Real Life Crime*, Amsterdam: International Network Against Cyber Hate, 2004, p.15.

<sup>103</sup> European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, *ECRI Report on Germany* (fourth monitoring cycle), Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2009.

<sup>104</sup> Noie Werte and Oithanasie, like their earlier counterparts Kraft durch Froide, replaced the letters "eu" with "oi" in their names. This reflected their allegiance to Oi!, although by this point this was less of a genre identification than a subcultural one, as these bands tended to play a form of metal.

styles emerging—such as the Autonome Nationalisten (Autonomous Nationalists) who appropriate the style of the extreme-left Autonomen. The latter movement peaked during the 1970s and 1980s in West Germany and is now mainly associated with anti-Fascist activity,<sup>105</sup> but is also known for its style (typically black clothing and covered faces) and its militant tactics. By emulating the Autonomen, the Autonome Nationalisten present an alternative extreme-right image to that of the skinhead, as well as asserting their independence from extreme-right groups. In part because of the Autonome Nationalisten's development of their own music scenes, extreme-right ideology has also expanded into a number of genres, including Darkwave, various forms of metal, techno, industrial, hip hop and folk music.<sup>106</sup>

The NPD have developed strong links with many musicians; indeed, they offer a legitimate avenue for performance, as under German law performances at political rallies are not considered as concerts, and otherwise illegal material is allowed to be performed. The NPD have resurfaced as the most prominent of the German extreme-right parties, gaining representation in the state parliaments of two former eastern states, and surviving a banning attempt by the Federal Government in 2001. The party twice nominated a musician, Frank Rennicke, for the office of German President, in 2009 and 2010. Rennicke, who styles himself as a “national bard,” has a long history in various extreme-right organisations and his music has led to his prosecution on two occasions under the “Volksverhetzung” (“incitement of popular hatred”) law. Rennicke played a prominent role in Projekt Schulhof (Project Schoolyard), the NPD campaign which distributed various compilation albums of material by extreme-right musicians for free to young people, particularly school students. The NPD have compiled a number of CDs under the Projekt Schulhof banner, and, although the selected songs tend to be less explicit in their ideology, some have been indexed and thus prevented from distribution to minors.

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<sup>105</sup> Sven Hillenkamp, ‘Die Autonomen’, in *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen*, Vol.8 No.2, 1995, pp.54-66.

<sup>106</sup> Dornbusch and Raabe, ‘Einleitung’, p.9.

The indexing of extreme-right music is one of the most prominent examples of state suppression of extreme-right music. In 1993, the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) launched a nationwide operation against the extreme right, which involved searching the homes and offices of musicians and bands, as well as the closure of Rock-O-Rama. This operation involved the trial for incitement of musicians from Störkraft, Radikahl, Tonstörung, Noie Werte, and Kraftschlag; most received probationary sentences, although Jens Arpe of Kraftschlag was sentenced to two years in jail.<sup>107</sup> In addition, much extreme-right music was placed on the index of texts which could prove harmful to minors; possession of this material did not become illegal, but the sale, advertising and distribution of it did. The list expanded from a few entries in the 1980s to 75 in 1995, to 140 in 1999.<sup>108</sup> A relative decline in the number of bands after 2006 was reversed in 2010, when 128 concerts were performed with an average attendance of around 130.<sup>109</sup>

The band Landser, a slang term for a common soldier, has been perhaps the most significant in Germany over the past ten years. Led by Michael Regener, also known as Lunikoff, it has a sizable back catalogue of albums, with such titles as *Das Reich kommt wieder* (*The Reich will rise again*), which are almost all banned in Germany. Landser's releases, along with those of its contemporaries, tend to be recorded in Germany but manufactured and distributed abroad, mainly in the United States, United Kingdom and Eastern Europe. These CDs are freely available in other countries, but are obviously intended for a German market; as such, they are distributed through underground networks or, more recently, through online file-sharing. It is this distribution that has been targeted by the authorities, since owning the music is not illegal, but selling it is. This business is big, with revenues cited as in

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<sup>107</sup> Barber-Kersovan, 'German Nazi Bands', pp.194-5.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p.195.

<sup>109</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 'Rechtsextremistische Musik-Szene', n.d., [http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af\\_rechtsextremismus/zahlen\\_und\\_fakten\\_2010/zuf\\_re\\_musikszene\\_2010.html](http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af_rechtsextremismus/zahlen_und_fakten_2010/zuf_re_musikszene_2010.html), accessed 2 Feb 2012.

the millions;<sup>110</sup> in 1997 German police raided 25 locations, arresting 14 figures of the extreme-right scene, and seizing 30,000 CDs of illegal material. They also exposed a lucrative sideline of the business by seizing 260,000 counterfeit CDs of mainstream music.<sup>111</sup> In 2006, Polish customs officials seized 300 illegal CDs being transported from the United States to Germany.<sup>112</sup> In 2009, German police carried out the largest operation against this music scene, an operation two years in the making. Searching more than 200 locations, they seized some 45,000 CDs, as well as a substantial amount of computers and weapons.<sup>113</sup>

Concerts are also legally risky. Landser allegedly played only once in public, and even then in masks, otherwise restricting themselves to private gigs. Despite their precautions, the members of Landser were charged with inciting racial hatred by a Berlin court in 2003; two members received probationary sentences due to their agreeing to testify against band leader Michael Regener, who was sentenced to three years in prison. Regener's incarceration, which caused the breakup of Landser, led to a protest in 2006 by 750 neo-Nazis outside the prison, calling for Regener's release.<sup>114</sup> Other bands, such as Race War, have since been prosecuted under the same laws, tending to receive probationary sentences.<sup>115</sup> There has been recent discussion around launching a "Nazi Shazam app," software to identify the audio fingerprint of indexed music, in order to curb the playing of extreme-right music at clubs, gatherings and on Internet radio stations.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Wunderlich, 'German White Power', p.51; Barber-Kersovan, 'German Nazi Bands', p.196.

<sup>111</sup> *Searchlight*, No.269 Nov.1997, p.7.

<sup>112</sup> *Searchlight*, No.378 Dec.2006, p.29.

<sup>113</sup> 'Germany Launches Massive Crackdown on Neo-Nazi Music', *Deutsche Welle*, 4 Mar 2009, <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,4073394,00.html>, accessed 17 Mar 2011.

<sup>114</sup> 'Neo-Nazis rally for jailed singer', *BBC News*, 21 Oct 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6073664.stm>, accessed 15 Mar 2011.

<sup>115</sup> *Searchlight*, No.379 Jan.2007, p.26.

<sup>116</sup> 'German Police Develop App to Curb Neonazi Music', *Spiegel Online*, 2 Dec 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-police-develop-app-to-curb-neonazi-music-a-936711.html>, accessed 13 Dec 2013.

The actions of the state have hampered the distribution of this material, but it is still a crucial component of German extreme-right culture, recruitment and income, with one former party member claiming that music is the primary means of financing the NPD.<sup>117</sup> Michael Regener founded Die Lunikoff Verschwörung (The Lunikoff Conspiracy) after his perceived betrayal by his Landser bandmates, and has continued to release material and perform since his release from prison. There has also been a marked shift into less confrontational genres and forms, which would in part seem to be a tactic to avoid further state censorship (see below). Despite the attentions of the state, the extreme-right scene in Germany has long since eclipsed Britain's as the most significant in Europe, although the tendency for musicians to sing in German has meant it has remained a domestic rather than an international phenomenon.

## Sweden

Like Britain, Sweden is presented as an exception to the appeal of extreme-right politics. Scholars note the sustained successes of parties in other Scandinavian countries, such as the Norwegian Fremskrittspartiet (Progress Party) and the Danish Fremskridtpartiet (Progress Party) and Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party), which have supported coalition governments, and contrast this with an almost complete lack of similar parties in Sweden.<sup>118</sup> It is significant to note that in the literature these parties are referred to as "radical-right populist" rather than extremist; they were founded in order to oppose high taxation and bureaucracy, rather than

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<sup>117</sup> 'Former NPD Official Speaks Out: Hitler Salutes, Nazi Songs and Dreams of a New Reich', *Spiegel Online*, 25 Feb 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/former-npd-official-speaks-out-hitler-salutes-nazi-songs-and-dreams-of-a-new-reich-a-609871.html>, accessed 25 Mar 2012.

<sup>118</sup> Jørgen Goul Andersen and Tor Bjørklund. 'Radical right-wing populism in Scandinavia: from tax revolt to neo-liberalism and xenophobia', in Paul Hainsworth (ed.), *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the margins to the mainstream*, London and New York: Pinter, 2000, pp.193-223; Jens Rydgren, 'Sweden: The Scandinavian Exception', in Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (eds.), *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp.135-150; Jens Rydgren, 'Radical Right-wing Populism in Denmark and Sweden: Explaining Party System Change and Stability', *SAIS Review* Vol.XXX No.1, Winter-Spring 2010, pp.57-71.

immigration. Formed in the early 1970s, these parties therefore did not come from any tradition of extremism or xenophobia, only mobilising against immigration in the 1980s.<sup>119</sup>

The portrayal of Sweden as a Scandinavian exception was challenged in September 2010 when the extreme-right Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats, SD) gained enough votes in the Swedish general election to qualify for representation in the Swedish Riksdag. When compared to its neighbours, Sweden's extreme-right support was still notably low; the SD received 5.7% of the vote, with 4% required to gain representation. In contrast, the Dansk Folkeparti has averaged 12–13% in parliamentary elections over the last ten years, while the Norwegian Fremskrittspartiet has increased its voter share from 15% in 1997 to 23% in 2009. In both cases minority governments have relied on these parties to pass legislation.

In the wake of SD's success, Swedish novelist Henning Mankell wrote that the party should have been "argued ... to oblivion," claiming that the refusal of the Swedish political mainstream to engage with extreme-right parties contributed to their success. Mankell also saw the Sweden Democrats as beneficiaries of protest voting, reflecting dissatisfaction with established parties, rather than support for extreme-right policies.<sup>120</sup> These sentiments tie in with the notion of Swedish exceptionalism, but scholars have forwarded other factors for the lack of extreme-right success.

Firstly, Sweden had a long period of uninterrupted Socialist Democrat rule, which meant that protest voting against it could be directed to other mainstream parties, whereas the success of the right as well as the left in Norway and Denmark meant that new parties were required to accommodate such protest voting.<sup>121</sup> In the late-1960s and early-1970s in Denmark and Norway non-socialist coalitions were in

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<sup>119</sup> Rydgren, 'Sweden: The Scandinavian Exception', p.135.

<sup>120</sup> Henning Mankell. 'We should have argued Sweden Democrats to oblivion', *The Guardian*, 24 Sep 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/sep/24/sweden-democrats-far-right-election>, accessed 28 Sep 2010.

<sup>121</sup> Rydgren, 'Sweden: The Scandinavian Exception', p.136.

power at the time of the most expansive period for the welfare state, followed by an unprecedented increase in taxes. In Sweden, the Social Democrats were in power, meaning the protests against tax could be directed to the established non-socialist parties.<sup>122</sup> In addition, although bloc voting dependent on class position was declining across Europe during this period, in Sweden it began from a much higher level, meaning that significantly high proportions of the working classes were still voting for the Social Democrats or Left Party.<sup>123</sup> These explanations are lent weight by research which has shown that Swedish voter attitudes, particularly xenophobia, do not differ significantly from their counterparts in other countries.<sup>124</sup> Of course, xenophobic attitudes alone do not necessarily produce an extreme-right voter, but they are a good indication of similarities in international voter attitudes.

One of the major obstacles the SD have had to face is their stigmatisation and marginalisation by the mainstream parties; Ramalingam argues that the SD partly overcame this by renegotiating the established norms of Swedish society, and the place of their policies within it.<sup>125</sup> Despite this apparent renegotiation, the SD have been and are often linked to neo-Nazis, which may in some part account for the difficulty they have had in gaining electoral traction. The party's origins can be traced to the Bevara Sverige Svenskt (Keep Sweden Swedish) movement, and the party's early senior members had a history of involvement with National Socialist parties.<sup>126</sup> Although the SD itself was never fascist or National Socialist, these links would prove a significant obstacle to the party's attempts to gain mainstream acceptance.

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<sup>122</sup> Goul Andersen and Bjørklund, 'Radical right-wing populism in Scandinavia', p.195.

<sup>123</sup> Rydgren, 'Radical Right-wing Populism in Denmark and Sweden', p.61.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Rydgren, 'Sweden: The Scandinavian Exception', pp.135-7.

<sup>125</sup> Vidhya Ramalingam, *The Sweden Democrats: Anti-Immigration Politics under the Stigma of Racism*, Working Paper No.97, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford, 2012.

<sup>126</sup> Anders Widfeldt, 'A fourth phase of the extreme right? Nordic immigration-critical parties in a comparative context', *NORDEUROPAforum* (2010:1/2), 7-31, <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/nordeuropaforum/2010-1/widfeldt-anders-7/XML/>.



This struggle for acceptance has continued; following the SD's modest electoral success, the other parties in the Riksdag all declared their unwillingness to associate with the party. This has not been due to lack of effort on the part of the SD, however. Under the leadership of Mikael Jansson (1995–2005) and particularly Jimmie Åkesson (2005–present), the SD have undergone an extensive process of modernisation and moderation. This has included the expulsion of some of the more extreme members of the party—during the early 1990s “there was no clear distinction between the SD and various skinhead and Nazi organisations”<sup>127</sup>—which in turn has led to the defection of some established politicians from mainstream parties to the SD. The process of modernisation included the banning of uniforms and an open renunciation of Nazism, as well as the toning down or deletion of some of the most contentious or hardline policies in the party's manifesto.<sup>128</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that the SD's attempt to integrate into mainstream political life is popular among voters, if not with other political parties. This is in spite of the scandals which have beset the party, reminiscent of the problems many extreme-right parties have experienced upon entry into democratic politics. In November 2012, two of the SD's MPs, Kent Ekeröth and Erik Almqvist—who also held positions of party justice policy and economic policy spokespersons respectively—took a “break” from their roles in the Riksdag after the *Expressen* tabloid released video footage of the men involved in a scuffle with a member of the public, with the clip also capturing their use of racially and sexually abusive language.<sup>129</sup> Two weeks later, MP Lars Isovaaar reported his bag stolen by “two unknown people with immigrant backgrounds”; in fact, Isovaaar had left his bag in a restaurant and police called to investigate the alleged robbery reported the MP for his

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<sup>127</sup> Rydgren, ‘Sweden: The Scandinavian Exception’, p.148.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.146.

<sup>129</sup> ‘Top Sweden Democrat quits after racist film’, *The Local*, 14 Nov 2012, <http://www.thelocal.se/44418/20121114/#.UL9RCY7IO40>, accessed 16 Nov 2012.

racist abuse towards a Riksdag security guard.<sup>130</sup> These scandals do not appear to have diminished the party's appeal; polling released in December 2012 showed the SD as the fourth most popular party in Sweden, with 7.9% support, with the party at 7.7% in June 2013.<sup>131</sup>

The SD do have a political precedent: in 1991 the newly-formed Ny Demokrati (New Democracy, ND) achieved even greater success than the SD did in 2010, gaining 30 seats in the Riksdag. They ran on a platform of reduced government, private enterprise, and immigration policies that bordered on outright xenophobia.<sup>132</sup> The party's instant success was based on the appeal of its leaders, aristocratic industrialist Ian Wachtmeister and record company owner Bert Karlsson, who used populist language and stunts, drastic rhetoric and humour to portray their distinctiveness from the established parties.<sup>133</sup> The party's time in the Riksdag was marked by internal divisions, scandals and discord between the two leaders, leading to Wachtmeister stepping down as chairman in 1994. By this point, ND had become the subject of ridicule,<sup>134</sup> and any hope the party had of presenting itself as an independent alternative was damaged by its cooperation with the non-socialist government.<sup>135</sup> As a result, ND was eradicated at the elections in 1994.

As well as providing an example of the potential for a populist party in Swedish politics, the activities of ND founder Bert Karlsson were hugely significant

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<sup>130</sup> 'Oinking Sweden Democrat spat at guard', *The Local*, 28 Nov 2012, <http://www.thelocal.se/44724/20121128/#.UL9TW47lO40>, accessed 28 Nov 2012.

<sup>131</sup> 'Sweden Democrats surge in new voter poll', *The Local*, 5 Dec 2012, <http://www.thelocal.se/44860/20121205/#.UL9bhY7lO40>; 'Moderates continue to tumble in new poll', *The Local*, 4 Jun 2013, <http://www.thelocal.se/48314/20130604/>, both accessed 12 Jun 2013.

<sup>132</sup> In contrast to most contemporary populist parties, ND also campaigned for strong associations with the European Union and European Community, particularly notable at a time of economic downturn.

<sup>133</sup> Anders Widfeldt, 'A fourth phase of the extreme right?'

<sup>134</sup> Ulf Hannerz, 'Afterthoughts', in André Gingrich and Marcus Banks (eds.), *Neo-Nationalism in Europe: Perspectives from Social Anthropology*, Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2006, p.272.

<sup>135</sup> Lars Svåsand, 'Scandinavian Right-Wing Radicalism', in Betz and Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1998, p.90.

for the music scene of the extreme right in Sweden. Despite—or perhaps because of—the lack of parliamentary opportunity for the extreme right in Sweden, the country has supported a strong, often neo-Nazi, extreme-right community. This community has had strong associations with violence; the successes of ND and SD were both followed by “lone wolf” shootings targeting immigrants: John Ausonius was convicted of a string of shootings in Stockholm in 1991 and 1992 after taking direct inspiration from ND,<sup>136</sup> while Peter Mangs was found guilty in 2012 for a number of shootings in Malmö. As well as attacks against immigrants, the movement’s enemies are also targeted; in 1999, two policemen were killed (the prosecutor referred to it as execution) by neo-Nazi bank robbers, while in a separate incident the trade union member Björn Söderberg was murdered for exposing the Nazi ideology of an elected representative. This was also the year that the journalist Peter Karlsson, who had highlighted the relationship between neo-Nazism and organised crime in a series of articles, and his son were seriously wounded by a car bomb.<sup>137</sup>

According to statistics produced by *The Skinhead International* (which is unfortunately unclear on its time-frame and research methods) Sweden in the early- to mid-1990s had a larger number of skinheads than countries many times its size.<sup>138</sup> Studies have noted the problem of xenophobic sentiments among adolescents,<sup>139</sup> while a 1997 study found that 12.2% of Swedish schoolchildren sometimes or often listened to racist music, with that figure rising to 17% for boys of Swedish origin.<sup>140</sup> The country has been a popular destination for touring bands from around the world

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<sup>136</sup> Jeffrey Stevenson Murer, ‘Security, identity, and the discourse of conflation in far-right violence’, *Journal of Terrorism Research*, Vol.2 Iss.2, Oct 2011, <http://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/jtr/article/view/188/195>.

<sup>137</sup> Charles Westin, ‘Neo-Nazism in a Welfare State: The Example of Sweden’, *Journal of Conflict and Violence Research* Vol.2, 2000, p.187.

<sup>138</sup> Anti-Defamation League, *The Skinhead International*, New York: ADL, 1995, p.1.

<sup>139</sup> Mikael Hjerm, ‘What the Future May Bring: Xenophobia among Swedish Adolescents’ in *Acta Sociologica*, Vol.48 No.4 Dec. 2005, pp.292-307.

<sup>140</sup> Helene Lööw, *White Noise Music: an international affair*, paper presented at 1st World Conference on Music and Censorship, Copenhagen 20-22 November 1998. Available at Freemuse, <http://www.freemuse.org/sw6649.asp>, accessed 5 Sep 2011.

(particularly Skrewdriver), has produced many musicians, and has provided outlets for extreme-right bands through record labels.

In the 1980s, Sweden followed the British example of Rock Against Communism, and there was much cooperation between the two countries in terms of publishing and the joint release of material. Particularly significant here was the Bevara Sverige Svenskt movement, which funded the release of music. However, the music scene was not a major source of income for extreme-right movements; until the early 1990s the extreme right was infamous for violent robberies of banks and munition stores. This approach changed around 1993 when music became the primary source of funding for extreme-right organisations,<sup>141</sup> thanks to the example of Ultima Thule. Signed to Bert Karlsson's Swedish label, Mariann Grammofon, and playing a form of music that came to be known as 'Viking Rock', Ultima Thule achieved immediate success, with three albums entering the chart that year and attaining gold and platinum status.<sup>142</sup> Despite this success, Karlsson was pressured into breaking the contract with Ultima Thule by the media controversy surrounding the band's allegedly racist origins.

The career of Ultima Thule can be divided easily into two periods. The first incarnation of the band was between 1982 and 1986, and was the period of their most overt affiliation with neo-Nazi groups. Their first single was funded by Bevara Sverige Svenskt, and during this period their music also appeared on compilations alongside contemporary racist bands from Britain. After disbanding for four years, the band returned with a new singer and worked their way to the mainstream exposure afforded to them through a major label contract. Despite the apparent convergence of ideologies, Karlsson claimed not to know of the band's past,

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<sup>141</sup> Stieg Larsson, 'Racism Incorporated—White Power music in Sweden' in Nick Lowles and Steve Silver (eds.), *White Noise: inside the international skinhead scene*, London: Searchlight, 1998, p.59.

<sup>142</sup> Currently, Gold and Platinum status in Sweden is set at 20,000 and 40,000 sales respectively, but when Ultima Thule achieved this status it was 50,000 and 100,000 sales, a significant achievement in a country with a population of around 9 million.

describing them as “really good kids” and “ordinary patriots and nationalists.”<sup>143</sup> The band themselves reacted strongly, protesting their innocence:

We in Ultima Thule are not racist or a Nazi band.... We have enough courage that we would admit it if we were.... We must question the mental health of our country when patriotic songs about Sweden, and the texts of our history, are equated with racism. This is only part of a witch hunt of anyone who dares to stand up for Sweden. This is as disgusting as when schoolchildren are forbidden from singing our national anthem because of fear of growing racism.... We recognise our right to be proud of our country and do not accept some obscure publication associating our music with racism and Nazism.<sup>144</sup>

It is difficult to describe Ultima Thule’s music as explicitly racist. They pioneered the form known as “Vikingarock” (“Viking Rock”), used to describe a genre of music which merged elements of folk music with rock and punk. Vikingarock has been said to occupy “the grey area between extreme-right ideology and a naïve romantic patriotism,”<sup>145</sup> and genre bands maintain that it is apolitical. However, Vikingarock is often seen as part of the extreme-right music scene, not only by anti-fascists but also by those within the extreme-right music scene itself, with Ultima Thule featuring in the British version of *Blood & Honour* as an example of success. They frequently appear on extreme-right forums, and attract fans who make Nazi salutes during their performances, although the band have been known to refuse to play while this was occurring, attempting to dissociate themselves from such behaviour.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Quoted in Larsson, ‘Racism Incorporated’, p.61.

<sup>144</sup> “Vi i Ultima Thule är inget rasist eller nazistband.... Så mycket kurage har vi, så att om vi är rasister så hade vi stått för det.... Vi frågar oss hur det mentala hälsotillståndet är i vårt land när patriotiska texter om Sverige, när texter om vår historia, likställs med rasism. Detta är endast ett led i en häxprocessliknande förföljelse av alla som vågar stå upp för Sverige. Detta är lika vidrigt som när skolungdomar inte får sjunga vår nationalsång p.g.a. rädsla för växande rasism.... Vi har tagit fasta på vår rätt att vara stolta över vårt eget land och vi accepterar inte några obskyra proffstryckare ska sammankoppla vår musik med rasism och nazism.” Ultima Thule Official Website, archived on 5 August 2008 at <http://web.archive.org/web/20080508025405/http://www.ultimathule.se/ejrasse.php>, accessed 5 Sep 2011. The band’s reference to an “obscure publication” is in reaction to the attention of the magazine *Expo* established by Stieg Larsson, an anti-Fascist publication similar to Britain’s *Searchlight*.

<sup>145</sup> “Vikingarocken rör sig i en gråzon mellan extremhögerens tankevärld och en naivt romantisk patriotism.” Daniel Poohl, ‘Musik i gränslandet’. *Expo*, 2007 No.2, <http://www.levandehistoria.se/node/2433>, accessed 11 Sep 2011. The ambiguity of Ultima Thule is explored further in Chapter Seven.

<sup>146</sup> ‘Swedish Gold: In the Land of Ice’, *Blood & Honour* (Britain), Issue 16 Spring 1994; Daniel Poohl, ‘Musik i gränslandet’.

Ultima Thule's protestation of innocence was based on the difference between them and their contemporaries. Before 2000, the most significant extreme-right musicians from Sweden other than Ultima Thule were probably Dirlewanger and Midgårds Söner. Although the latter emphasised their Swedishness, probably influenced by Ultima Thule, they revealed their ideology through songs such as 'Fourth Reich.' Dirlewanger, named after a German SS commander and his eponymous penal unit, released albums such as *White Power Rock 'n' Roll* and *Rocking For The Golden Race*, used swastikas on their album covers and released songs such as 'Nigger Season.' The band did try to capitalise on Ultima Thule's success by repackaging *White Power Rock 'n' Roll* as *Heroes in the Snow*, renaming themselves the same before shortening it to Heroes.

The success of Ultima Thule was a hugely significant event in the history of the Swedish extreme-right music scene. Trading on the financial and marketing advantages their mainstream success had allowed them, Ultima Thule set up their own label and record store, releasing many more albums (they played their final show in July 2012) and providing an outlet for other bands in the scene. While Ultima Thule could conceivably claim that their own music did not contain racist content, their association with the bands on their label seems to expose their ideology. Among the bands signed to Ultima Thule's label were Midgårds Söner and Dirlewanger.

Following Ultima Thule's commercial success, the mid-1990s saw a surge in independent producers of extreme-right music in Sweden, such as Last Resort Records, Svea Music, Nordland and Ragnarock Records. While many Swedish bands had little international significance, the labels did, producing albums by bands from around the world, including Britain, the United States and Australia.<sup>147</sup> In the late 1990s the Swedish scene started to decline; this has been linked to a police crackdown on live gigs, which culminated in a raid of one concert and the arrest of

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<sup>147</sup> Larsson, 'Racism Incorporated', pp.61-3.

297 people.<sup>148</sup> This, alongside the increasing availability of extreme-right music online, means that most labels have now folded or are trading at a drastically reduced level.

Since 2000, the most significant Swedish musician has undoubtedly been the female singer Saga. Although she has contributed to the releases of the band Symphony of Sorrow as well as the third *Pro Patria* album by Midgård, she is best known for her solo work. 2000 was the year she released the first two volumes (of three) of *My Tribute to Skrewdriver*, which situated her firmly in the extreme-right tradition, and an album of originals, *On My Own*, was released in 2008. Her style however is markedly different. As well as being a female musician in an overwhelmingly masculine environment, Saga plays in “softer” styles and forms, and her lyrics are more ambiguous than most of her contemporaries (see Chapter Seven). In this way, Saga follows the ambiguous approach of Ultima Thule.

While it is difficult to estimate the popularity of any musician from the extreme right, Saga seems to be a relative superstar and hugely popular. Prussian Blue (see below) claimed to have listened to her music when they were young, which inspired them to create their own, and many of her contemporaries refer to her in interviews (albeit often in terms of her sexual allure). Although Sweden is still producing a number of extreme-right bands in a variety of genres, it is Saga who is most prominent in the contemporary scene.

There is a parallel between the recent development of extreme-right music and of the political context in Sweden. The success of Saga is a manifestation of image modernisation, with the extreme-right distancing themselves from skinhead culture and instead presenting themselves as the home of ordinary Swedish patriotism. This modernising process can clearly be traced to the work of Ultima Thule, but that band were an exception to the general tendency for explicitly racist skinhead music. This type of music is still made in Sweden, but it has greatly

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<sup>148</sup> David Lagerlöf, ‘The Rise and Fall of White Power Music in Sweden’, in Anton Shekhovtsov and Paul Jackson (eds.), *White Power Music: Scenes of Extreme-Right Cultural Resistance*, Ilford: Searchlight and RNM Publications, 2012, p.41.

diminished in significance because it is no longer in harmony with the message of the political wing of the extreme right. This decline has been intensified by the SD discarding extreme-right music from its strategy, instead attempting to adopt Swedish folk music. However, the SD's folk campaign was largely ineffective, and it is possible that the party will attempt to re-establish its links with extreme-right music in the future, although such music would undoubtedly be "softer."

## **United States**

Certain features of the United States are particularly distinctive among these four nations; its history as an immigrant nation means it is difficult to employ arguments of indigenous cultures and peoples, as has become common with extreme-right movements in Europe. It also has a drastically different history of race relations; while European countries only experienced mass non-white immigration after World War Two,<sup>149</sup> the immigrant nature of the US and its history of slavery means that race has for centuries been a much more visible concept. American extreme-right culture therefore has had a longer history and more to draw on than its European counterparts. Also of importance is that much of the population in modern America which is deemed "non-white" is native-born, as opposed to the first-generation immigrants who are often the object of the European extreme right's hostility.

In addition, the strong two-party political system in the US means that extreme-right groups have largely worked outwith the democratic sphere, whereas in European countries there have usually been links with groups which are engaged

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<sup>149</sup> This assertion can be problematic in that it downplays the fluid history of Europe in terms of constantly shifting ethnic groupings and boundaries, and also does not acknowledge that some immigrants now comfortably situated as "white," such as the Irish, were not always seen as such (see Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooligan: A history of respectable fears*, London: Macmillan Press, 1983; and Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995). However, the origin of the contemporary extreme right in Europe is mainly due to post-war immigrant groups, particularly Asians and Afro-Caribbeans in Britain, Turkish *Gastarbeiter* in Germany, and asylum seekers in Sweden.



with the democratic process, even if only superficially.<sup>150</sup> Extreme-right figures have taken part in elections, standing as candidates for Democratic and Republican nomination, but this is relatively rare and has generally not been successful. The groups examined in this section are, therefore, not political parties as such, and extreme-right ideology has little hope of democratic advancement, even in comparison with the relatively ineffectual political parties cited above. This undoubtedly contributes to the continuing prevalence of violent rhetoric (explored in Chapter Five) amongst the American extreme-right—since violent revolution appears to be the only conceivable route to establishing extreme-right power—and the preponderance for conspiracy theorising, since lack of enfranchisement is attributed to nefarious forces. The lack of any centralised focus for the extreme-right in the USA may also be a factor in the sheer diversity of groups, encompassing the militia movement, neo-Nazis, motorcycle groups, skinheads, Christian fundamentalists, pagans, and more. These groups can and do work together, but also demonstrate the tendency for infighting and disagreement which characterises the extreme right.

Probably the most notorious of these activist movements is the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) which, with a history stretching back over 140 years, “remains a symbol of perseverance ... and continues to inspire Aryan vigilantism and devotion to white power.”<sup>151</sup> This history is generally divided into three stages. The Klan was founded by former Confederate soldiers in 1866 in the southern state of Tennessee, with the original intention of preventing newly emancipated black people from voting. Described as “America’s first true terrorist group,”<sup>152</sup> this first Klan conducted a reign of terror throughout the former Confederate states between 1867 and 1871,

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<sup>150</sup> I do not consider the Tea Party in this study. Although its rhetoric and approach are similar to many extreme-right groups, its decentralised nature means it has no overarching ideology, making it difficult to speak of any particular facets of Tea Party ideology as typical.

<sup>151</sup> Pete Simi and Robert Futrell, *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement's Hidden Spaces of Hate*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010, p.12.

<sup>152</sup> ADL, ‘Ku Klux Klan—Extremism in America’, n.d., [http://www.adl.org/learn/ext\\_us/kkk/default.asp?LEARN\\_Cat=Extremism&LEARN\\_SubCat=Extremism\\_in\\_America&xpicked=4&item=kkk](http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/kkk/default.asp?LEARN_Cat=Extremism&LEARN_SubCat=Extremism_in_America&xpicked=4&item=kkk), accessed 15 Jun 2012.

targeting not only freed black slaves but whites sympathetic to Reconstruction policies. A Joint Congressional Committee found that in this four-year period “the Klan had been responsible for hundreds, possibly thousands, of black deaths.”<sup>153</sup> Legislation designed to curb Klan violence was passed in 1870 and 1871, and led to the decline of the Klan. However, the Klan’s influence set the foundation for white political monopoly in the South, while also creating a violent pattern for regulating race relations.<sup>154</sup> This latter point is well demonstrated by the fact that lynchings, rather than declining with the demise of the Klan, actually peaked during the 1890s.

While the first Klan was intended to maintain the dominance of whites in the United States, the second was more diverse in its ideology. It was reestablished in 1915 by William J. Simmons who had been inspired by film-maker D.W. Griffith’s glorification of the Klan in *The Birth of a Nation*, released in the same year; the second Klan even adopted the film’s uniforms and burning crosses.<sup>155</sup> The second Klan was heavily driven by Protestant interests, expanding its list of targets beyond blacks and the government, and reaching truly national prominence:

Jews, Catholics, non-Aryan foreigners and socialists were now regarded as enemies by the Klan.... The Klan also attacked people considered immoral or traitors to the white race. Indeed, all those who deviated from a strict conservative norm were regarded as legitimate targets. Second, the new Klan managed to extend its influence outside the South—and by the mid-1920s had become a national organization, a reflection of the unsettled conditions in America following World War I, during which a conservative, xenophobic reaction swept the country. Although estimates vary, at the peak of its power in 1925, Klan membership may have reached as high as 5 million.<sup>156</sup>

Although the second Klan also engaged in violent activities—which, along with internal schisms, would eventually lead to its decline—they also used other means to advance their goals. These included political methods, with Klan members and

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<sup>153</sup> Michael Cox and Martin Durham, ‘The politics of anger: the extreme right in the United States’, in Paul Hainsworth (ed.), *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the margins to the mainstream*, London and New York: Pinter, 2000, p.289.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., pp.289-290.

<sup>155</sup> Members of the first Klan had worn hoods and cloaks to preserve their anonymity while committing acts of violence, but the uniform only became standardised in the second Klan.

<sup>156</sup> Cox and Durham. ‘The politics of anger’, p.290.

sympathisers elected to offices across the country, and also cultural practices, with the Klan encouraging a sense of community through, among other things, music (see below).

The KKK was marginalised again during the Great Depression, re-emerging to a degree to oppose the Civil Rights Movement and, like the first, mainly based in the former Confederate states. Rather than entirely refounding the Klan, as Simmons had done, this third Klan involved the unification (to a degree) of independent “Klaverns” (local units) and the targeting of black families and Civil Rights activists through terrorism. The third Klan faced extreme hostility from public opinion and the FBI, although some police departments such as in Birmingham, Alabama, cooperated with it. The Klan declined due to its failure to stop the Civil Rights Movement,<sup>157</sup> and splintered into isolated factions, continuing in this essentially disunited form until the present day. Branches of the KKK became associated with neo-Nazi and white power movements, which led to the establishment of some KKK chapters outside the United States (Ian Stuart Donaldson formed a sideline band called The Klansmen, and joined an English chapter<sup>158</sup>). Today’s Klan is wedded to the white power scene, particularly through what Simi and Futrell call the “Nazification” of the KKK, with neo-Nazi symbolism, ideology and ritual integrated into Klan traditions.<sup>159</sup> Other Klans have arisen that have associated with groups such as Christian Identity and Aryan Nations.<sup>160</sup>

I have devoted this space to histories of the various Klans from a time before my main period of study because they have had such an influence on extreme-right cultures which followed. Not only has the KKK been the foremost extreme-right

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p.292.

<sup>158</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, ‘The Klan Overseas’, *Intelligence Report* Winter 1998, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/1998/winter/the-klan-overseas>, accessed 2 Oct 2012.

<sup>159</sup> Simi and Futrell, *American Swastika*, p.11.

<sup>160</sup> Martin Durham, *White Rage: The extreme right and American politics*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, p.43.

organisation in the USA throughout its history, but its iconography and symbolism have become embedded in the national consciousness. The Klan is also significant in that it has provided one of the main inspirations for successive extreme-right groups, rather than the National Socialism to which most European groups can trace their history; National Socialist groups do exist in the United States, but it is important to recognise the singular influence of the Ku Klux Klan as well. Martin Durham's summary of the second Klan's ideology demonstrates many features which are shared by the contemporary extreme right:

Shaped by wartime jingoism, it called for opposition to "Foreign Labor Agitators." It was anti-Semitic too. Bolshevism, the Klan declared, was "a Jewish-controlled and Jewish-financed movement," and Jewish international bankers were seeking to dominate the governments of the world.... The pope, it declared, was an alien despot, and his church hated America and sought to crush it. The Klan was fiercely opposed too to what it saw as a rising tide of immorality. The country, Klansmen claimed, had entered a "corrupt and jazz-made age," and "degrading" films and "filthy fiction" were undermining America.<sup>161</sup>

This focus on degeneracy, anti-communism and anti-Semitism may be so close to Nazi ideology as to brook no distinction, but it allows the contemporary extreme right in the United States to trace its roots back to something American rather than foreign.<sup>162</sup>

While the Klan's history has mainly been associated with violence, the second manifestation established its own musical culture which indicates a unique history of extreme-right musical culture in the USA. The Klan used the leading medium of its time in order to disseminate its message, sheet music.<sup>163</sup> The covers of these products have been catalogued by Danny O. Crew and analysed by Holly

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<sup>161</sup> Durham, *White Rage*, p.7.

<sup>162</sup> For the American roots of the American extreme right see Martin Durham, *White Rage*, pp.36-65; for its German influences see *Ibid.*, pp.18-35. On the rivalry between various Klan groupings and National Socialists, see particularly *Ibid.* pp.45-6.

<sup>163</sup> The Klan also took advantage of recording technology—particularly vinyl records—to distribute their music, but this appears to be of secondary importance given the relative abundance of sheet music compared to records.

Holmes,<sup>164</sup> with Holmes arguing that economic benefits in their distribution were of secondary importance:

For the price of a dollar or two, the KKK sold the idea, or intellectual good, of inclusion in an organization whose service was to restore American values and ideals to society. Ideas included anti-miscegenation, anti-immigration and anti-Catholicism, while services included the Klan's own version of law enforcement to stop violators of prohibition, pressure on citizens to vote for particular Klan candidates for local government and pressure on lawmakers to enact restrictions on immigration.<sup>165</sup>

As well as sheet music, the Klan of the 1920s sponsored fiddle contests, promoting ostensibly "old-fashioned" music in order to establish music far removed from Jewish and black influence as "authentic American music."<sup>166</sup> Music was also an integral part of many Klan ceremonies, appropriating or adapting hymns and popular and patriotic tunes, and collecting the results in songbooks known as "Klorans."<sup>167</sup> Martin Durham notes that the second Klan sought to root "itself in local communities" in addition to its acts of terrorism,<sup>168</sup> and in this practice music seems to have played an important role in fostering a sense of community, as well as spreading the message of the Klan.

The Klan's particular association with the South, especially in its first and third incarnations, was part of a political ideology which found expression in another bastion of Southern culture: country music. In their analysis of what they refer to as "country hate music," Messner *et al.* see these products of the 1950s and 1960s as something distinct from the "hate rock" generally associated with extreme-right musical cultures. Among the artists they analyse are the Sons of Mississippi, Happy Fats, the Klansman, Colonel Sharecropper, the Dixie Greys, Odis Cochran and the

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<sup>164</sup> Danny O. Crew, *Ku Klux Klan Sheet Music: An Illustrated Catalogue of Printed Music, 1867-2002*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2003; Holly Holmes, 'Ku Klux Klan Sheet Music: "Creating Desire" in 1920s Middle America', Paper presented at 20th Century Music and Politics Conference, University of Bristol, 2010.

<sup>165</sup> Holly Holmes, 'Ku Klux Klan Sheet Music'.

<sup>166</sup> Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*, London: Faber and Faber, 2007, p.56.

<sup>167</sup> Holmes, 'Ku Klux Klan Sheet Music'.

<sup>168</sup> Durham, *White Rage*, p.8.

Three Bigots, and Johnny Rebel.<sup>169</sup> The figure behind much of this material was Jay Miller, founder of many labels, the most significant in this context being Reb Rebel Records. Miller's association with black blues musicians suggests that he was motivated primarily by economics rather than ideology. While this music was distributed through "underground" rather than mainstream channels, it had significant commercial successes; for example, it is said that Happy Fats' 'Dear Mr. President' sold over 200,000 copies.<sup>170</sup>

Although less successful than Happy Fats, Johnny Rebel (real name Clifford Joseph Trahan) was the musician with the greatest legacy. Trahan only recorded around a dozen songs as Johnny Rebel in his career, but these were picked up by the later extreme-right scene,<sup>171</sup> and Rebel was acclaimed as a historical virtue. Indeed, Rebel has been held up as the inspiration for the entire extreme-right scene, with Michael Wade arguing that Rebel inspired Skrewdriver in the creation of their musical style.<sup>172</sup> This seems, however, unlikely; while Ian Stuart Donaldson admired Rebel, there is no evidence as to when he became aware of his music. What seems more probable is that the contemporary extreme-right scene evolved on its own with origins in punk, before some in the scene became aware of Rebel's work and cited him as a forerunner, albeit not a direct inspiration.

Klan culture was an influential seam, but it had to coexist, and at times compete, with American National Socialism. While pro-Nazi figures such as William Dudley Pelley, Gerald Winrod and Charles Coughlin were vocal in the interwar period,<sup>173</sup> it was not until 1959 that a prominent American National Socialist party

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<sup>169</sup> Beth A. Messner, Art Jipson, Paul J. Becker and Bryan Byers, 'The Hardest Hate: A Sociological Analysis of Country Hate Music', *Popular Music and Society* Vol.30 No.4, 2007, pp.513-531.

<sup>170</sup> Paul Becker, Arthur Jipson, Beth Messner and Bryan Byers, 'From Rebel Records to Prussian Blue: A History of White Racist Music in the United States', Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Convention, New York, August 2007.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. *Nordland* No.3, August 1995.

<sup>172</sup> Michael Wade, 'Johnny Rebel and the Cajun Roots of Right-Wing Rock', *Popular Music and Society*, Vol.30 Iss.7, 2007, pp.493-512.

<sup>173</sup> Durham, *White Rage*, pp.8-9.

was formed. Founded by George Lincoln Rockwell and initially called the World Union of Free Enterprise National Socialists, it was renamed in 1960 as the American Nazi Party, likely as part of Rockwell's strategy of using propaganda to shock and gain attention.<sup>174</sup> Attention-seeking also involved dressing party members in uniforms and holding confrontational demonstrations against Jews and civil rights. Rockwell went so far as to create a "Hate Bus" in 1961 in reaction to civil rights buses, daubing a Volkswagen van with the slogans "LINCOLN ROCKWELL'S HATE BUS," "WE DO HATE RACE MIXING" and "WE HATE JEW-COMMUNISM."<sup>175</sup> Although Rockwell and the American Nazi Party became notorious for acts such as these, the lack of progress led Rockwell to take the party down a more "professional" route. He changed the party's name in January 1967 to the National Socialist White People's Party and replaced the use of "Sieg Heil" with "White Power," inspired by the call "Black Power." In August that year, Rockwell was assassinated by a former party member, John Patler, who had been expelled in April for his apparently "Bolshevik leanings."<sup>176</sup>

While Rockwell's political ventures were in many ways a failure—particularly in terms of supporter numbers—his legacy was hugely influential on future generations of the American extreme right. Simonelli considers three particular aspects to be central to this legacy.<sup>177</sup> First, Rockwell's replacement of Nazi slogans with the concept of "White Power" expanded the supremacist recruiting pool to include those thought of as non-Aryan. Second, Rockwell was one of the first in the American extreme right to advocate Holocaust denial, which was to become an important component in extreme-right ideology. Third, Rockwell linked together

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<sup>174</sup> George Lincoln Rockwell, 'From Ivory Tower to Privy Tower: On the art of propaganda' [1966], *American Nazi Party Website*, <http://www.americannaziparty.com/rockwell/materials/articles/tower.php>, accessed 2 Oct 2012.

<sup>175</sup> Lawrence N. Powell, 'When Hate Came to Town: New Orleans' Jews and George Lincoln Rockwell', *American Jewish History* Vol.85 No.4, 1997, p.398.

<sup>176</sup> 'Killer of American Nazi Chief Paroled', *St Joseph News-Press*, 23 Aug 1975, p.7A.

<sup>177</sup> Frederick J. Simonelli, *American Fuehrer: George Lincoln Rockwell and the American Nazi Party*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Nazism with Christian Identity, the latter being the interpretation of the Bible which sees Jews as children of Satan. As well as these legacies identified by Simonelli, two more features of Rockwell's life are significant. First, he recognised the potential of music, releasing songs such as 'Ship Those Niggers Back' by Odis Cochran and the Three Bigots. Second, he heavily influenced the next generation of the American extreme right, such as William Luther Pierce.

Pierce, a physicist who had spent three years teaching at Oregon State University, was employed by Rockwell in 1966 as editor of the journal *National Socialist World*, which "cultivated its image and status as the leading international Nazi periodical with long articles and book reviews written for an educated and literate readership, as well as high standards of production."<sup>178</sup> In 1970, with Rockwell's successors taking different ideological directions, Pierce became leader of the National Youth Alliance, renaming it the National Alliance (NA) in 1974. The NA espoused revolutionary ideology, and published monthly instructional articles in the party magazine on weapon use and bomb building.<sup>179</sup>

In 1975, the NA began the monthly serialisation of *The Turner Diaries*, a novel Pierce wrote under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald and which was published as a book in 1978. The book depicts a revolution in the United States leading to race war, and the extermination of non-white groups, as well as Jews and homosexuals. Pierce followed this with *Hunter* (also as Andrew Macdonald), published in 1989, which described the actions of an assassin targeting mixed-race couples, and journalists and politicians who were seen as promoting race-mixing. *The Turner Diaries*, and to a lesser extent *Hunter*, had a huge influence on the development of the extreme right. *The Turner Diaries* popularised the idea of leaderless resistance, distancing political movements from the often illegal activities of their adherents. Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh was an avid reader of the

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<sup>178</sup> Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess, Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth and Neo-Nazism*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, p.205.

<sup>179</sup> Durham, *White Rage*, pp.27-8.



book, and his attack has been compared to the bombing of the FBI headquarters in the novel.<sup>180</sup>

The Order, a terrorist group which committed a series of murders, robberies and a bombing in the early 1980s, took its name from the organisation in *The Turner Diaries*, itself a reference to the SS. The leader of The Order, Robert Jay Mathews, was killed by FBI agents during a gun-fight in 1984 while his colleagues were arrested and imprisoned. Of the other members, the most influential was undoubtedly David Lane, who died in 2007 while serving a 190-year prison sentence. During his time in prison, Lane became one of the leading writers and thinkers of the extreme-right movement. Lane coined the 14 words which have permeated the extreme right, the number 14 making many appearances in signatures, manifestos, propaganda, etc. The 14 words are: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children,” and at times are accompanied by Lane’s continuance: “because the beauty of the White Aryan woman must not perish from this earth.” Lane’s interest in Wotanism also popularised this religion within the extreme right.

While Pierce’s novels had inspired activists to commit terrorist acts, Pierce himself decided that a long-term approach was needed. According to Durham:

[W]hat most marked the Alliance was Pierce’s argument that in the period ahead, it should aim to recruit from ‘an elite minority carefully sifted out of the overall White population’. The resulting organization would ‘elaborate and elucidate the truth’ and when mass mobilization at last became possible, it would be ready.<sup>181</sup>

To achieve this end, the NA produced a wide variety of propaganda materials including novels, radio broadcasts, comic books<sup>182</sup> and video games.<sup>183</sup> Of these, it

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<sup>180</sup> Myrna Shinbaum, ‘Q&A on The Turner Diaries’, *Anti-Defamation League*, 16 May 1996, [http://www.adl.org/presrele/militi\\_71/2737\\_71.asp](http://www.adl.org/presrele/militi_71/2737_71.asp), accessed 16 Nov 2012.

<sup>181</sup> Durham, *White Rage*, p.28.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. William Pierce, Daniel Roush and William Williams, *New World Order Comix No.1: The Saga of ... White Will!!* Hillsboro: National Vanguard Books, 1993.

<sup>183</sup> *Ethnic Cleansing* (2002) is a first-person shooter in which the player—as either a skinhead or klansman—roams the streets killing blacks and hispanics, before descending to the subway to kill their Jewish masters. In *White Law* (2003) the player takes the role of a police officer and gains points through killing minorities.

was music that was most successful, and Pierce harnessed its potential through his label, Resistance Records.

The first person on the extreme right to popularise the use of skinhead music in the US was Tom Metzger, leader of White Aryan Resistance (WAR). The American skinhead subculture was imported from Britain in the early 1980s and, as in Britain, incorporated both racist and anti-racist skins. Early on, Skrewdriver records were the main touchstone of the racist American skinheads due to a lack of local bands and venues.<sup>184</sup> Stores sprang up selling records by Skrewdriver and other British bands like No Remorse and Brutal Attack, while American bands such as Final Solution, were forming.<sup>185</sup> Metzger helped shape the scene by pioneering the use of computer bulletin boards, recorded message telephone lines and public access television, and Metzger's appearances on mainstream talk-shows, despite their unsympathetic portrayal and treatment of him, afforded him enormous publicity. Perhaps his most telling contribution, however, was his establishment of "Aryan Fest" in 1988, involving speeches and music. Metzger's success was observed by other organisations such as Aryan Nations, who went on to create their own festivals to attract skinhead recruits.<sup>186</sup>

These opportunities encouraged the development of domestic bands and diminished the reliance on British imports. Bands such as Bound For Glory, formed in 1989, were successful enough to embark on tours in Europe. While skinheads provided a recruiting pool for extreme-right organisations, their violent tendencies caused problems. In 1988, skinhead members of WAR murdered an Ethiopian student, Metzger saying the perpetrators had done their "civic duty." The Southern Poverty Law Center and Anti-Defamation League brought a civil lawsuit against

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<sup>184</sup> Devin Burghart, 'Beyond Boots and Braces: The White Power Skinhead Music Scene in the United States', in Burghart (ed.), *Soundtracks to the White Revolution: White Supremacist Assaults on Youth Music Subcultures*, Chicago: Center for New Community, 1999, pp.27-8.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>186</sup> Leonard Zeskind, 'A Bad Moon Rising: White Power Skins in America' in Lowles and Silver (eds.), *White Noise: inside the international nazi skinhead scene*. London: Searchlight, 1998, p.74.

Metzger and WAR, asserting the latter's responsibility, and in 1990 Metzger was found liable for \$12.5 million.<sup>187</sup> This judgement crippled Metzger and WAR, ensuring their relative impotence, with Metzger's contribution to the extreme right since then essentially reduced to making speeches at rallies and hosting an online radio show.

Metzger's influence over the music scene was vastly reduced, and the establishment of Resistance Records created a new focal point for it. George Burdi had founded the band RaHoWa (an abbreviation of "Racial Holy War") in 1989, and they became one of the most successful bands of the 1990s, with songs such as 'Ode to a Dying People' frequently covered in the scene. Burdi founded Resistance—encompassing a magazine and production company—in 1993. Not just a distributor but a major producer of music, Resistance became the central point of skinhead culture, selling up to 50,000 CDs a year in a variety of genres.<sup>188</sup> Burdi's control ended with his imprisonment on assault charges in 1997 (he later renounced his racist ideology altogether), and William Pierce bought the company on behalf of the National Alliance for \$100,000.<sup>189</sup> Under Pierce's control, Resistance recovered from a year-long low following Burdi's imprisonment, with sales in 2000 reportedly generating more than \$1 million.<sup>190</sup> Pierce had extended his commercial reach in 1999 with the purchase of the Swedish label Nordland Records, also the name of one of the more significant Swedish extreme-right magazines, in the same year, reportedly doubling his inventory to 80,000 CDs.<sup>191</sup> This allowed Pierce not only to

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<sup>187</sup> 'Berhanu v. Metzger', *Southern Poverty Law Center*, n.d., <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/case-docket/berhanu-v-metzger>, accessed 2 Oct 2012.

<sup>188</sup> 'Deafening Hate: The Revival of Resistance Records', *Anti-Defamation League*, n.d., [http://www.adl.org/resistance\\_records/Hate.asp](http://www.adl.org/resistance_records/Hate.asp), accessed 2 Oct 2012.

<sup>189</sup> *Searchlight*, No.295 Jan 2000, p.5.

<sup>190</sup> Simi and Futrell, *American Swastika*, p.80.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

take control of contracts for some of Europe's more significant bands, but also to provide an avenue of distribution for his own label.<sup>192</sup>

Resistance's success, as well as the National Alliance's, ended with Pierce's death in 2002. Erich Gliebe, who had been running Resistance Records, became NA leader but presided over the descent of the organisation into acrimony. Gliebe temporarily left the party and was replaced by his associate Shaun Walker. Walker's imprisonment a year later—on charges related to the beating of Mexican American and Native American people—led to Gliebe's return. During this period, NA membership and Resistance sales declined dramatically.<sup>193</sup> According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the NA "has been barely functioning since the spring of 2005,"<sup>194</sup> with at least three new groups being formed by purged members. Resistance maintained a large catalogue and online presence for a number of years, but has not produced a magazine since spring 2007, with its website pages apparently not updated since 2008,<sup>195</sup> and the website has been inoperative since at least July 2013.<sup>196</sup>

During the time between Burdi's imprisonment and the National Alliance reestablishing Resistance, a number of other companies were founded to fill the gap in the market. Distributors were set up to serve particular locations: Tri-State Terror in the Northeast, Panzerfaust Records in the Midwest, and Imperium Records in the Northwest.<sup>197</sup> The most successful of these was Panzerfaust, becoming Resistance's biggest competitor. In 2004 Panzerfaust gained notoriety with its "Project Schoolyard" (similar to the NPD's "Projekt Schulhof) which attempted to distribute

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<sup>192</sup> *Searchlight*, No.295 Jan 2000, p.5.

<sup>193</sup> Durham, *White Rage*, p.34.

<sup>194</sup> 'National Alliance', *Anti-Defamation League*, n.d., [http://www.adl.org/learn/ext\\_us/n\\_alliance.asp](http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/n_alliance.asp) accessed 2 Oct 2012.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. <http://www.resistance.com/featured/>, accessed 2 Oct 2012.

<sup>196</sup> <http://www.resistance.com>, accessed 15 Jul 2013.

<sup>197</sup> Devin Burghart, 'Beyond Boots and Braces', p.34.

100,000 copies of a 20-track sampler to teenagers.<sup>198</sup> The label collapsed when label co-founder Anthony Pierpont was “exposed” as mixed-race,<sup>199</sup> but was reborn under different management as Free Your Mind Productions in 2005. Free Your Mind now competes with a number of similarly-sized distributors, such as Micetrap Distribution, ISD Records (originally based in Britain but relocated to the USA), Condemned Records, Elegy Records and MSR Productions. This competitiveness has undermined the use of music by any one organisation to gain dominance; this is exacerbated by the tendency of distributors to negotiate non-exclusive rights with musicians,<sup>200</sup> diffusing revenue between various distributors.

The music scene in the United States is still highly significant, with the country commonly cited as producing the greatest number of extreme-right bands. The collapse of Resistance and Panzerfaust has meant that this music is not harnessed by one organisation in particular, but this has not reduced the circulation and significance of this music. Indeed, the lack of central organisation has frequently been advocated, with many figures—including Pierce and Metzger—instead advocating “lone wolf” structures. Music plays a crucial role in providing a sense of community between individual activists,<sup>201</sup> which can manifest as a community of brutality. The American skinhead scene has been described by the Anti-Defamation League as even more violent than its international counterparts,<sup>202</sup> and the music has been cited as contributing to violence committed before, during, and after gigs. Most recently, this was manifested in the revelation that the gunman who killed six and

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<sup>198</sup> Becker *et al.*, ‘From Rebel Records to Prussian Blue’.

<sup>199</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, ‘Panzerfaust Collapses Amid Aryan Purity Debate’, *Intelligence Report* Spring 2005 No.117, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2005/spring/white-power-music>, accessed 16 Oct 2012.

<sup>200</sup> T.K. Kim, ‘A Look at White Power Music Today’, *Intelligence Report* Spring 2006 No.121, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2006/spring/white-noise?page=0.0>, accessed 16 Nov 2012.

<sup>201</sup> Futrell, Simi and Gottschalk, ‘Understanding Music in Movements’.

<sup>202</sup> ADL, *The Skinhead International*, p.84.

himself in a Wisconsin Sikh temple in 2012 was a member of a number of white-power bands.<sup>203</sup>

### **Contending with Censorship**

While the analyses above demonstrate the variation of political and musical contexts across these four countries, external factors can also lead to significant national variations. Censorship is one of the most important of these factors, often targeting some of the more explicit content of extreme-right music, but applied differently according to national laws. In the United States, policy deviates significantly from international consensus over the prohibition of hate speech, as summarised by Frederick Schauer:

[T]here appears to be a strong international consensus that the principles of freedom of expression are either overridden or irrelevant when what is being expressed is racial, ethnic or religious hatred.... [T]he incitement to racial hatred and other verbal manifestations of race-based animosity are widely accepted as lying outside the boundaries of what a properly conceived freedom of expression encompasses.... In contrast to this international consensus that various forms of hate speech need to be prohibited by law and that such prohibition creates no or few free speech issues, the United States remains steadfastly committed to the opposite view.<sup>204</sup>

In the United States, the First Amendment<sup>205</sup> essentially grants the extreme-right music scene complete freedom to produce and distribute its material and, consequently, the music—and particularly the lyrics—coming from the United States has not altered much over the past twenty years. In Germany, Great Britain and Sweden there is a general legislative consensus that hate speech consists of any communication which is threatening or abusive towards a person or persons on account of their race, ethnicity or religion. Extreme-right music has therefore been

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<sup>203</sup> Heidi Beirich and Mark Potok, 'Alleged Sikh temple shooter former member of Skinhead band', *Southern Poverty Law Center*, Aug 2012, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/news/alleged-sikh-temple-shooter-former-member-of-skinhead-band>, accessed 11 Sep 2012.

<sup>204</sup> Frederick Schauer, 'The Exceptional First Amendment', in Michael Ignatieff (ed.), *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp.33-35.

<sup>205</sup> "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

targeted in each of these countries, but the extent of the law, and its application, differs. This is further complicated by the fact that some of the most pertinent legislation has come into effect relatively recently, forcing the extreme right to adapt or face criminal proceedings.

Where censorship has affected the ability of bands to operate, they have often come up with methods to overcome it. Skrewdriver could never tour the United States because their frontman, Ian Stuart Donaldson, had a criminal record in the UK for assault, but the band did carry out relatively successful tours of Germany and Sweden. A performance by Skrewdriver of their song *White Power* in Germany in 1993 demonstrates some of the ambiguities encountered in dealing with this music.<sup>206</sup> During the video taken by a member of the crowd, Nazi/Roman salutes made by the backing vocalists on stage and by some members of the audience are clearly visible.

I stand and watch my country;  
Going down the drain;  
We are all at fault now;  
We are all to blame;  
We're letting them take over;  
We just let them come;  
Once we had an Empire;  
And now we've got a slum.  
[chorus]  
White Power! For Britain;  
White Power! Today;  
White Power! For Europe;  
Before it gets too late.<sup>207</sup>

Whether the song itself would violate German law is debatable; the lyrics' implication of white supremacism arguably falls foul of Germany's *Volksverhetzung* law, which forbids the incitement of hatred against a segment of the population. Certainly illegal, now at least, are the Roman/Nazi salutes made by those on stage

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<sup>206</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcTfTxg6PKE>, accessed 7 Nov 2011. This footage is probably taken from the *Skrewdriver Live In Germany* DVD offered for sale by various extreme-right distributors, cf. ISD Records, [http://www.isdrecords.com/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&products\\_id=34](http://www.isdrecords.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=34), accessed 7 Nov 2011.

<sup>207</sup> The recorded version of 'White Power' (Eponymous Single, 1983, White Noise) has the chorus "White Power for England... White Power for Britain." By expanding this to "Europe," Donaldson is evidently widening his message to include the audience in front of him.

and in the crowd. These salutes, along with much Nazi symbolism and vocabulary, are prohibited and punishable by a custodial sentence. Confronted with such situations, extreme-right activists have attempted to circumvent the law. For a salute, they adopted the “Kühnengruß,” a three-fingered salute using the thumb, index and middle fingers—although this is now illegal in Germany, it is still a legal alternative in Austria and Switzerland. While symbols such as the swastika are also prohibited, emblems such as the Odal Rune have been adopted to serve the same purpose. Another common tactic is to use numbers to represent acronyms; for instance the 18 in the name of the organisation Combat 18 refers to the letters AH, Adolf Hitler. 88 designates Heil Hitler, and 28 refers to Blood & Honour.

As outlined in the above section on Germany, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution has targeted extreme-right music, bringing prosecutions against musicians, producers and labels, as well as raiding premises and seizing illegal material, including music. While methods such as those listed above have been devised to circumvent legislation, some bands have simply ignored the legal restrictions, continuing to produce illegal music and risk prosecution. As a result, many prominent German extreme-right musicians have criminal records, although others have adopted the softer strategies outlined in Chapter Seven.

Although Swedish law has similar legislative proscriptions as Germany in terms of Nazi symbolism, these have often remained unenforced due to concerns over their constitutional validity. Anders Widfelt notes that in 1996 and 1997 Swedish courts ruled that the law against political uniforms (with particular reference to swastika armbands)

could not be applied, as it ‘manifestly’ (i.e. obviously) conflicts with the Instrument of Government’s protection of freedom of expression. The law against political uniforms still exists, but is to all intents and purposes impractical.

Conversely, the Swedish Supreme Court ruled in 1996 that emblems and symbols (including clothes) connected to the extreme right can be regarded as persecution of



population groups.<sup>208</sup> These legislative inconsistencies have made prosecution difficult, and the authorities are further hampered by the tactics of musicians and distributors (see below). However, since the Supreme Court ruling of 1996, the use of explicitly Nazi symbolism has declined. It is difficult to find anything as blatant as Dirlewanger's use of the swastika for the album cover of *Rocking for the Golden Race* (Rebelles Européens, 1989), for example.

Swedish law is strict when it comes to inciteful lyrics, although this does not seem to have always been the case. The song 'Nigger Season' (Single, 1989) by Dirlewanger—one of the most popular bands of the Swedish scene—obviously constitutes hate speech:

It's time to grab your gun;  
It's time to have some fun;  
Nigger nigger nigger hunt;  
Hunt hunt tonight.

It is notable that when this song was released as a single, the band themselves censored the racial slur in the song title (rendered 'N\_\_\_\_\_ Season'), but not elsewhere on the cover, which carries the statement "Watch out nigger!" The menace of the song is heightened by the cover photograph, which shows the band wielding various firearms and posing by a pickup truck. This song is an obvious candidate for censorship, being both threatening and abusive on racial grounds, but as far as I am aware no charges have ever been brought against Dirlewanger during their long career.

Prosecution is not always a simple matter. By 2003, only one extreme-right band had been prosecuted under Swedish law. The extreme-right music scene has employed a number of tactics to avoid prosecution, the most obvious of which is the printing of innocent words on record sleeves while the songs themselves contain hate lyrics. Typical examples include replacing "Jew" with "you," "White power" with

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<sup>208</sup> Anders Widfelt, 'The diversified approach: Swedish responses to the extreme right', in Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*. London: Routledge, 2004, pp.163-164.

“Viking power,” “White pride” with “pure pride.”<sup>209</sup> In addition, albums are released without identifying markers on the sleeve, making it difficult to trace them back to their producers.<sup>210</sup> The scene has used smaller, and perhaps less scrupulous, manufacturers ever since its links to more well-known businesses were exposed in the 1990s.<sup>211</sup> Prosecution is complicated further by the statute of limitations, which requires charges to be brought against music within a year of its manufacture and distribution.

Perhaps the most prominent censorship of any Swedish band in the scene was not on legal grounds. As outlined above, Bert Karlsson signed the band Ultima Thule to his label in 1993, and they achieved instant Swedish chart success with their albums and singles. Although Ultima Thule employed the Swedish flag rather than the swastika, and although their lyrics emphasised faux-Romantic themes of tradition and heritage rather than racial supremacy, the band’s past association with organisations such as Bevara Sverige Svenskt (Keep Sweden Swedish) led to a huge amount of media pressure, and eventually Karlsson was forced to drop the band from his label. Although Ultima Thule had essentially been banned from taking part in the mainstream music industry, the exposure and royalties they received allowed them to set up their own independent record store and label, releasing a considerable amount of music over the years and providing a base for other bands—such as Dirlewanger (at this point renamed Heroes)—to operate from.

While Ultima Thule’s parting from Karlsson’s label was essentially due to media pressure, the most dogged opponents of Swedish extreme-right music have tended to be anti-fascist activists. Stieg Larsson, the author of the Lisbeth Salander novels, was primarily known in his lifetime as the co-founder and editor-in-chief of the anti-fascist magazine *Expo*. Along with its British associate publication

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<sup>209</sup> Most Swedish extreme-right bands sing in English.

<sup>210</sup> ‘Sverige störst i världen på nazirock’, *Expo*, Apr 2003, [http://expo.se/2003/48\\_232.html](http://expo.se/2003/48_232.html), accessed 16 Nov 2010.

<sup>211</sup> Stieg Larsson, ‘Racism Incorporated—White Power music in Sweden’ in Nick Lowles and Steve Silver (eds.), *White Noise: inside the international skinhead scene*, London: Searchlight, 1998, p.64.

*Searchlight*, *Expo* worked to publicise and oppose the activities of the extreme right, although the effectiveness of their opposition is variable. In 1989, for example, Skrewdriver were due to play a concert in Eskilstuna; anti-Fascist journalists managed to convince the Swedish police to close the venue, but Skrewdriver had another venue on standby and, unbeknownst to the police and protestors, proceeded to play their concert.<sup>212</sup>

The disruption of concerts has also been the typical approach in Britain. In the 1970s, the punk subculture associated with the extreme right gained such a reputation for the violence of its fans that venue owners, local authorities and the police refused many bands permission to perform. This meant that potential venues were reduced to a handful owned by sympathetic people, some of which were rather unconventional; for instance, future British National Party leader Nick Griffin used to organise concerts on his family farm. The typical way to avoid the restrictions was to book venues under assumed names, but even then the concerts faced disruption by anti-fascist protestors. Attempting to overcome this, venues would often be kept secret, with ticket-holders directed to a meeting point, from which they would be redirected to the venue. This did not deter protesters, however, often leading to violent confrontations; the most famous example of this is probably the London concert known as the “Main Event” in 1989, at which frequent violent clashes between protesters and concert-goers led to around two-thirds missing the concert altogether. In the aftermath, most extreme-right musicians were forced out of London, and Britain became less significant as a place for live extreme-right music.

Even the BNP, who take great care to ensure their music does not contain any overt hate speech, have found their activities effectively censored: the party’s annual Red White and Blue Festival was denied an entertainment licence in 2009 by the local council in Derbyshire, ruling out musical performances. The party abandoned future festivals in the face of similar difficulties, and frequent protests by anti-fascist

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<sup>212</sup> *Blood & Honour: The Independent Voice of Rock Against Communism: Against Red Front and Mass Reaction*. Issue 9, n.d., p.2.

campaigners. This continuing dedication by anti-fascists to sabotaging extreme-right performances has mostly been directed at live performances and associated gatherings; there are no examples of extreme-right music being banned in Britain.

## **Conclusion**

As this summary has shown, it is difficult to generalise the extreme-right music scene across national boundaries, or even to assert with confidence what “extreme-right” means. However, there are a number of similarities worth highlighting. Later chapters explore the wide variety of genres employed by the extreme right, but each of the more successful musical cultures in these nations stems from the Oi! scene of Britain. Even in the USA, where an independent music culture associated with the KKK already existed, it was the spur of the British skinhead subculture which led to the proliferation of extreme-right bands there. In this context, it is easy to see why Britain is viewed as a “Fatherland” within the extreme right where music is concerned.

Unsurprisingly, extreme-right musical culture has often been inextricably linked to extreme-right political movements, with the differing nature of these movements having a significant influence on the music itself. Oi! in Britain had acquired extreme-right associations, but it was the agency of the NF which coordinated musicians and gave them a common platform. However, the inadequacy of NF organisation led to the establishment of Blood & Honour, which made the extreme-right music scene autonomous. Similarly, in Sweden the early scene was coordinated around Bevara Sverige Svenskt, and it was Bert Karlsson of Ny Demokrati who gave Ultima Thule their opportunity. Again, circumstances led to musicians taking on the primary role, in this case with Ultima Thule’s record label being a main outlet for their contemporaries.

More successful use of music by political movements has occurred in Germany and the United States. In Germany, the use of music by the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands is a crucial component in their

recruitment and retention of supporters. In the USA, the significance of the National Alliance was greatly increased by the revenue and publicity it received from its music operations. However, this latter example shows the precariousness of many extreme-right endeavours: in a similar manner to the collapse of Blood & Honour in Britain following the death of Ian Stuart Donaldson, the death of William Pierce led to the collapse of Resistance. These examples illustrate the difficulty faced in re-establishing centralised control over extreme-right music once it is lost.

Perhaps the most significant common feature of these scenes is their evolutionary nature. Much scholarly literature on extreme-right music focuses on its historical roots in the skinhead subculture, or on the musical styles associated with this subculture. Such an approach implies that extreme-right music has remained relatively static in its output and ideology. As the following chapters illustrate, the extreme-right scene is in fact more diverse in genre, lyrical themes and ideology. As a consequence, this music constructs and caters to a range of—at times contrasting—identities.

**Chapter Two:**  
**The Paranoid Style and Popular Music:**  
**Extreme-Right Narratives of Conspiracy and Mass Media**

*“We need the people to awake and fight for us right now;  
‘Cause we will never be enslaved by the Zionist masterplan.”*

Skrewdriver, ‘Tomorrow is Always Too Late’, *Blood & Honour*, Rock-O-Rama,  
1985

*“I am well aware that the orthodox opinion is that 6 million Jews  
were gassed and cremated and turned into lampshades. Orthodox  
opinion also once held that the Earth was flat... I have reached the  
conclusion that the ‘extermination’ tale is a mixture of Allied wartime  
propaganda, extremely profitable lie, and latter [sic] witch-hysteria.”*

Nick Griffin, 1998.

*“If you haven’t looked recently at what MTV is offering to our teenagers, make a  
point to survey their programmes. They are pushing as hard as they can the idea  
that miscegenation—that sex between Whites and Blacks—is a natural and good  
thing, a fashionable thing. They are deliberately and blatantly encouraging  
teenaged White girls to have sexual relations with Blacks.”*

William Pierce, ‘Skating on Thin Ice’, *American Dissident Voices*, 2011, p.185.

*“A nation under the power of an alien and destructive mass media is equally  
oppressed as one under the power of a foreign, occupying government.”*

David Duke, *Jewish Supremacism*, 2007, p.31.

Extreme-right politics is often bound up with conspiratorial thinking. Conspiracy theories are used to attract and mobilise support, to justify prejudice and to place blame upon identifiable enemies. Perhaps most crucial concerning conspiracy theories, however, is their ability to provide an explanation for the marginal status of extreme-right supporters: in what is often an ideology of racial supremacy, the apparent marginal status of an elite racial group presents a potentially contradictory predicament. Such marginalisation can be explained by the nefarious conspiracies of enemies of the white race, and the passive nature of the majority that accept this unnatural condition.

This chapter examines the use of conspiracy theories to create a shared sense of identity amongst extreme-right supporters. This includes not only the dissemination of conspiracy belief through various media including songs, but also the discourse surrounding reception of mainstream music and the broader beliefs about the conspiratorial nature of mass media. This in turn leads to a belief in the superior nature of extreme-right supporters due to their ability to perceive and resist this manipulation. Within this model, the subversive design of the mainstream music industry is contrasted with the honesty and integrity of the extreme right's own music scene. Furthermore, conspiracy theories serve to foster, confirm and justify prejudices, while providing believers with a sense of group solidarity.

### **Theorising Conspiracies**

The term “conspiracy” has roots in legal parlance, being defined in English law as a crime which “consists in the agreement of two or more persons to do an illegal act, or to do a lawful act by unlawful means.”<sup>1</sup> In becoming part of popular language, “conspiracy” is no longer confined to the illegal, but also to the immoral, the reprehensible: “a combination of persons for an evil or unlawful purpose.”<sup>2</sup> While

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Conspiracy’, Oxford English Dictionary, 2011, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/39766?redirectedFrom=conspiracy#>, accessed 12 Feb 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

“conspiracy” is therefore fairly clearly defined, the compound term “conspiracy theory” is much more contested. It was originally a neutral descriptor for any claim of civil, criminal or political conspiracy, but its popular meaning has evolved into something substantially more complex.

Peter Knight states that

At the most basic level, a conspiracy theory blames the current, undesirable state of affairs on a concerted conspiracy by a secret group.... However, the label “conspiracy theory” usually suggests that the interpretation offered is wrong.<sup>3</sup>

Knight’s mention of secrecy is a crucial component of conspiracy theories, although the group in itself need not be secret (with a plethora of supposedly public bodies such as the United Nations, European Union and the World Bank frequently featuring in conspiracy theories) so long as some of their activities or motives are assumed to be concealed from public view. The notion of concertedness is also crucial, with conspiracy theories suggesting a view of the world as governable and controllable, a perspective often contrasted with the view of history as “the fairly random and unpredictable interaction of countless individuals, or the predictable interplay of vast, impersonal structural forces.”<sup>4</sup>

Another important aspect of conspiracy theorising is the attitude towards evidence. Evidence which supports a theory is embraced, but a lack of evidence is not considered damaging; such a lack is simply taken to demonstrate the effectiveness of the conspirators in concealing their activity. This belief in the reach and power of conspirators means that “the very same thing that critics argue makes conspiracy theories unbelievable is, for conspiracy theorists, the strongest evidence in favour of their claims.”<sup>5</sup> This attitude allows the theorist to dismiss any evidence

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia*, Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2003, p.16.

<sup>4</sup> Knight, *Conspiracy Theories in American History*, p.16.

<sup>5</sup> Jovan Byford, *Conspiracy Theories: A Critical Introduction*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p.34.



that would seem to invalidate a theory as proof of the meticulous detail constructed by the conspirator(s) to cover their tracks.

The apparent irrationality of ignoring disproving evidence is in part the reason that “conspiracy theory” is generally considered a pejorative term, demonstrated particularly by the popular culture stereotype of a “conspiracy nut” wearing a tin foil hat to avoid having their thoughts read or their mind controlled.<sup>6</sup> The notion of conspiracism as the domain of the mentally imbalanced has even been the starting-point of some academic analyses; in his book on the subject Daniel Pipes observed that while “political paranoids need not suffer from personal paranoia ... often the two go together.”<sup>7</sup> While such attitudes build on Richard Hofstadter’s introduction of the paranoid into the discourse of conspiracism in his highly influential essay *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*—and he is also blamed for equating a conspiracist mindset with deficient mental health—Hofstadter was clear that this was not a parallel he wished to make, saying:

the idea of a paranoid style would have little contemporary relevance or historical value if it were applied only to people with profoundly disturbed minds. It is the use of paranoid modes of expression by more or less normal people that makes the phenomenon significant.<sup>8</sup>

The difficulties in equating conspiracism with paranoia are demonstrated by an analysis of conspiracy belief in the United States.<sup>9</sup> A 1994 survey found that 69% of respondents believed John F. Kennedy had been killed by a conspiracy, while finding considerable agreement levels between 41% and 55% for conspiracies

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<sup>6</sup> The pejorative depiction of conspiracy theories can itself serve a political purpose in implying irrationality and faulty reasoning, and particularly in legitimising a rival—perhaps “official”—explanation, thus maintaining “the boundary between what are deemed the beliefs of competent actors and those of ‘paranoid’ conspiracy theorists.” Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p.21.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Robert Alan Goldberg, *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001, xi.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics: And other essays* [1964], Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> The United States is a hub of conspiracy theories and belief, to the extent that Goldberg refers to it as an American tradition, and demonstrates this through an account of the prominence of conspiracism throughout US history (Goldberg, *Enemies Within*, pp.1-21), while there is an edited collection dedicated to exploring conspiracist thinking in the USA (Peter Knight (ed.), *Conspiracy Nation: The politics of paranoia in postwar America*, New York: New York University Press, 2002.)

regarding the concealment of evidence of flying saucers; FBI involvement in the assassination of Martin Luther King; a (modern) Japanese conspiracy to destroy the American economy; and the collusion of Ronald Reagan and George Bush with Iranian hostage-takers not to release the American hostages until after the 1980 US Presidential election.<sup>10</sup> More recent studies have found that nearly half of African Americans believe AIDS is a man-made virus;<sup>11</sup> a third of Americans believe the US government actively took part in or allowed the 9/11 terrorist attacks to justify war in the Middle East;<sup>12</sup> while a quarter of Americans doubt President Barack Obama was born in the United States and a fifth believe he is a Muslim.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, when such significant proportions of the population identify with conspiracy theories, it becomes difficult to attribute conspiracism to paranoid tendencies within the individual or to marginal groups.

Conspiracism as paranoia also does not allow for the fact that conspiracy theories can at times be grounded in justifiable doubts. While Knight suggests that proven conspiracies are often called something else, such as “investigative journalism, or just well-researched historical analysis,”<sup>14</sup> it is difficult to theorise a distinction between conspiracy theories which have no rational basis and those which merely remain unproven. One methodology which can help to distinguish the belief in conspiracies from the sociological phenomenon of conspiracy theories has been forwarded by Jovan Byford, who considers “conspiracy theories as a *tradition of*

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<sup>10</sup> Ted Goertzel, ‘Belief in Conspiracy Theories’, *Political Psychology* Vol.15 No.4, Dec 1994, pp. 732-734.

<sup>11</sup> Darryl Fears, ‘Many Blacks Cite AIDS Conspiracy’, *Washington Post*, 25 Jan 2005. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A33695-2005Jan24.html>, accessed 24 Jan 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hargrove, ‘Third of Americans suspect 9-11 government conspiracy’, *Scripps News*, 1 Aug 2006, <http://www.scrippsnews.com/911poll>, accessed 24 Jan 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Shannon Travis, ‘CNN Poll: Quarter doubt Obama was born in U.S.’ *CNN*, 4 Aug 2010. <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/08/04/cnn-poll-quarter-doubt-president-was-born-in-u-s/>; Lauren Green, ‘Nearly 1 in 5 Americans Thinks Obama is Muslim’, *Fox News*, 19 Aug 2010. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/08/19/nearly-americans-thinks-obama-muslim-survey-shows/>, both accessed 24 Jan 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Knight, *Conspiracy Theories in American History*, p.16.

*explanation*, characterised by a particular *rhetorical style*.”<sup>15</sup> Byford considers the publication in 1797 of two accounts, by Augustin Barruel and John Robison,<sup>16</sup> of conspiratorial causes of the French Revolution—particularly the involvement of Freemasons and the Illuminati—to be particularly important to the current phenomenon of conspiracy theories. Citing Geoffrey Cubitt,<sup>17</sup> Byford notes certain features which particularly distinguished these writings: prior to the Revolution, theories restricted themselves to fairly specific events with tangible rewards for the conspirators; Revolutionary theories centred the plot on secretive societies whose goal was “the implementation of an evil and subversive plan,” namely the destruction of Christianity and the established social order.<sup>18</sup>

The work of Barruel and Robison has been recycled and recontextualised on numerous occasions, thus contributing to what Byford perceives as “a distinct narrative structure, thematic configuration and explanatory logic.”<sup>19</sup> In this view of conspiracy theories as a tradition, conspiracies are seen as the stimulating force in history: diverse global events and time periods are integrated into a grand arching conspiracy theory driven by a particular nefarious group. The characteristics of the conspirators can easily adapt to the context and politics of the time, as can the stated goals, with the result that conspiracy theorising is an adaptable and multifunctional process.

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<sup>15</sup> Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p.4, Byford’s emphasis.

<sup>16</sup> Augustin Berruel, *Memoirs pour servir a l’histoire ju Jacobinsme*, Paris: 1797; John Robison, *Proofs of conspiracy against all religions and governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati and the Reading Societies*, Edinburgh, 1797.

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt, ‘Conspiracy myths and conspiracy theories’, *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* Vol.20 No.1 1989, pp.12-26.

<sup>18</sup> Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, pp.43-44.

<sup>19</sup> Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p.32.

## The Place of Conspiracies

Along with this classification of the theories themselves, Benjamin McArthur has categorised ‘conspiracy-mindedness’ in four categories, with different functions ascribed to each<sup>20</sup>: **First**, there is the “casual embrace” of conspiracy theories, a desire “to find purposefulness where others might only see coincidence, to prefer the clarity of simple explanations to the ambiguity of contradictory facts, to see personal motivation at work rather than impersonal forces.”<sup>21</sup> McArthur sees this attitude as one we all indulge in occasionally, and as relatively unthreatening. Indeed, an absolute disinclination to believe in the existence of conspiracies could be seen as a naïve position, given the many proven instances of conspiracies taking place.

The **second** form of conspiracy-mindedness is possibly an exploitation of the first, namely the use of “intrigue as a form of entertainment.”<sup>22</sup> The prime example of this is probably Hollywood, with a tradition of conspiratorial plotting from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, through to Oliver Stone’s *JFK*, while the theme of secretive interests at the heart of corporations and governments are crucial to the plots of films such as the *Bourne* trilogy and *The Constant Gardener*. McArthur notes that his students largely derive their opinion on historical conspiracies from film.

The **third** mindset of conspiracism is “the conviction of socially oppressed or disadvantaged groups that they are the victims of an organised effort.”<sup>23</sup> Such a tactic can function as a coping mechanism, allowing someone to give a name or face to impersonal forces. For example, in their discussion of American rap music, Christopher Holmes Smith and John Fiske suggest that the use of the Illuminati and the New World Order “are not so much signs of the ‘inner workings of a paranoid

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<sup>20</sup> Benjamin McArthur, “‘They’re Out to Get Us’: Another Look at Our Paranoid Tradition’ in *The History Teacher* Vol.29 No.1, Nov 1995, pp.37-50.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

imagination' as of a tactical naming of the unspeakable, and of a deep-rooted distrust-verging-on-hatred of powerful elites." The frequent use of the Illuminati in rap music is an attempt to give corporeality to a system which favours whites over blacks, a tool to reveal the true nature of power which is bound in secrecy.<sup>24</sup>

McArthur's **fourth** category, stemming from the third, is the "use of conspiracy as a political weapon." This is frequently represented by an individual who claims to speak on behalf of a threatened majority.<sup>25</sup> As McArthur notes, "Resentment remolds reality,"<sup>26</sup> and it is the resentment directed toward certain groups that has been the most prominent feature of conspiracy theorising as a political weapon. The most obvious victims have been the Jews, the victims of the defamatory *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, of the bona fide conspiracy of the Holocaust,<sup>27</sup> and recent concerted attempts all the way up to academia<sup>28</sup> designed to undermine the significance of the Holocaust, even to deny its very existence.

Although conspiracy theories can be found across the political spectrum, it is no surprise that those espoused by the extreme right often have undertones of racism and xenophobia in their targeting of ethnic and religious minorities. This conspiracy theorising generally falls into McArthur's third and fourth categories: this is no casual embrace of conspiracies, nor a means of entertainment, but rather a means of explaining the perceived marginalisation of the white race, and an exploitation of the rhetoric of conspiracies to vilify political enemies.

Related to these functions, conspiracy theorising plays a fundamental role, as with many other of the means of constructing identity through extreme-right music,

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<sup>24</sup> Christopher Holmes Smith and John Fiske, 'Naming the Illuminati', in Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp.606, 609 & 611.

<sup>25</sup> McArthur, "'They're Out to Get Us'", pp.40-42.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>27</sup> I wish to avoid any potential misunderstanding of my use of language here, and state clearly that I mean there was a bona fide conspiracy carried out by the Nazis to wipe out the Jewish population.

<sup>28</sup> Among the most prominent of Holocaust-denying bodies is the American Institute for Historical Review, while some academics, such as Arthur Butz, a professor of electronic engineering at Northwestern University, have published revisionist material.

in clearly delineating the lines of “us” and “them,” and furthermore ascribing absolute moral characteristics to both: the “we” of “us” are generally moral, virtuous and noble; “they,” meanwhile, are frequently degenerate, under-handed, and even demonic. The naming of “them” provides a target group on whom any number of problems can be blamed, with the implication that, if they can be removed, the conspiracy will be broken and life will improve for those who were conspired against.

It should be noted that those on the extreme right do not identify themselves as conspiracy theorists; there is an evaluative, frequently pejorative, association with the term in colloquial language which does not flatter the theorist.<sup>29</sup> However, within the narrative structure of conspiracism, those who do not believe in conspiracy are themselves subject to scorn and ridicule by the theorists, with inclusion in the latter group therefore bestowing its own kind of internal privileged position.

In addition to being a marker of belonging, conspiracy theories can serve a motivational function, with Ramet arguing, in her discussion of Eastern European anti-Semitic groups, that “Conspiracy theories serve as the fastest mechanism for energizing hatred.”<sup>30</sup> Linked to this energisation of hatred is the use of conspiracies to justify (or foster) prejudices, perhaps most evident in the frequent portrayal of Jews as manipulative, controlling and immoral. Furthermore, research has suggested that exposure to conspiracy theories can lead to political disillusionment,<sup>31</sup> suggesting that conspiracy theories may serve a purpose for those who are already disillusioned, particularly politically.

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<sup>29</sup> This is especially the case in German, where the equivalent term—*Verchwörungsmythos*—translates literally as the conspiracy *myth*, an even stronger presupposition of falsehood (Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p.23).

<sup>30</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, ‘Defining the Radical Right: Values and Behaviors of Organized Intolerance in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe’, in Ramet (ed), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, p.17.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Jolley and Karen M. Douglas, ‘The social consequences of conspiracism: Exposure to conspiracy theories decreases intentions to engage in politics and to reduce one's carbon footprint’, *British Journal of Psychology*, 2013.

## Common Conspiracy Theories of the Extreme Right

While conspiracism is a significant component of the contemporary extreme right, belief in conspiracy theories does not necessarily indicate extreme-right political belief, just as disbelief does not negate such politics. However, there are a number of conspiracy theories which are recurrent within extreme-right movements, either persisting unchanged or evolving to suit contemporary and local needs. The most common target of extreme-right conspiracies have been Jews, a common target of conspiracy theorising in general.<sup>32</sup> This is nothing new; allegations concerning Jewish conspiracies date to at least the Middle Ages—particularly the blood libel and host desecration accusations<sup>33</sup>—and theories surrounding the French Revolution are known to have incorporated claims of Jewish involvement. However, perhaps the most influential articulation of the theory of Jewish control is *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which originated in Russia around 1903, and was first published in English in 1919.

The *Protocols* purports to be the secret minutes of a meeting of unspecified Jewish leaders, who discuss their plan of attaining world domination through global control of the press, political parties and economies. It is a well-known forgery with probable links to the Russian Tsarist secret police,<sup>34</sup> but evidence of forgery has been dismissed in the typical manner of the conspiratorial mindset, which sees such contradictory evidence as proof of the conspirators' power: for example, the translator of an early English edition writes that "The claim of the Jews that the Protocols are forgeries is in itself an admission of their genuineness."<sup>35</sup> The reach of

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<sup>32</sup> Byford devotes a whole chapter to the subject of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories from the French Revolution to the present, *Conspiracy Theories*, pp.95-118.

<sup>33</sup> Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. by Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967, esp. pp.77-88; Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p.55.

<sup>35</sup> Introduction to *Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion*, trans. by Victor E. Marsden, London: The Britons Publishing Society, 1933, p.5.

the *Protocols* was immense; Norman Cohn, who argues that the *Protocols* was the “warrant for genocide” that culminated in the Holocaust, claims that its circulation was second only to the Bible until 1945.<sup>36</sup>

While the *Protocols* fell from prominence after the Holocaust, it is still capable of finding a receptive audience, particularly in the contemporary extreme right and anti-Semitic elements in the Arab world.<sup>37</sup> The *Protocols* are still disseminated by extreme-right publishers and websites, but the Jewish domination theory has also evolved, most notably with the emergence of the theory of ZOG, which stands for Zionist Occupation(al) Government. Coined in 1976 by American neo-Nazi Eric Thomson, ZOG covers much of the same ground as the *Protocols*; governments are under Jewish control, thus “occupational” as they have no democratic legitimacy or mandate. Unlike the *Protocols*, ZOG thus legitimises resistance to supposedly puppet regimes, since it asserts that Jews have already established political control—leading to phrases such as “Jewnited Kingdom”<sup>38</sup>—although the stage of the conspiracy can vary across different articulations.

The *Protocols* and ZOG are the fullest articulations of Jewish control, which demonstrates the persistence of anti-Semitism in extreme-right movements even as Jews are substituted for different Others, particularly Muslims. Billig suggests that, in this case, conspiracy theorising becomes self-perpetuating, for it is easier to adapt old arguments involving Jews to new contexts than to proclaim that decades of anti-Semitic conspiracism was in error—and, therefore, that extreme-right movements were also wrong.<sup>39</sup> So while extreme-right movements substitute the threatening Other to reflect tensions of the time—as in Britain, where pre-war anti-Semitism was

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<sup>36</sup> Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*.

<sup>37</sup> On the latter see Milton Shain, *Antisemitism*, London: Bowerdean, 1998, pp.95-99.

<sup>38</sup> As in Blood & Honour Combat 18 ‘What is ZOG?’, n.d., <http://www.skrewdriver.org/zog.html>, accessed 17 Feb 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Billig, ‘The Extreme Right: Continuities in Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory in Post-War Europe’, Roger Eatwell and Noël O’Sullivan (eds.), *The Nature of the Right: European and American Political Thought since 1789*, London: Pinter Publishers, 1989, p.163.



replaced with fear of Afro-Caribbean immigration, in turn replaced by hostility towards Asian immigrants from former British colonies in the 1970s, and the current climate of Islamophobia—anti-Semitism persists as an overarching explanatory component of conspiracy theorising.

It should be noted that even in organisations which forward conspiracy theories, particularly anti-Semitic ones, these theories may not be an integral part of their platform, especially in material aimed at outsiders. Some conspiracy theories are utilised specifically to appeal to the disillusioned, but there is a self-awareness in some quarters of the way that conspiracism can alienate potential supporters. Recognising this, the pre-modernised British National Front had a two-tier propaganda process, in which “[m]essages designed for mass appeal concentrated upon West Indian and Asian targets, whilst the ‘serious’ party magazines, to be read by the inner core of members, were fundamentally anti-Semitic.”<sup>40</sup> Similar wariness of engaging outsiders with extreme-right conspiratorial beliefs is evident on *Stormfront*, for example:

I have tried to lay out the full conspiracy to people and they blow me off every time. Where I have been successful is narrowing my focus to a single issue, such as this latest gaff [sic] with the banks, by pointing out that all of the Federal Reserve board Governors happen to be Jewish, and that the massive mortgage [sic] defaults were cause [sic] by affirmative action lending. People are smart enough to draw their own conclusions, all you need to do is point them in the right direction.<sup>41</sup>

And advice on appealing to a contributor’s brother:

Don't approach him with the jewish thing, this will only make you look nuts, and further entrench him into his beliefs.<sup>42</sup>

This holding back of conspiracy theories suggests that they can function on a similar level to “softer” extreme-right music, with softer material gradually introducing potential supporters to more extreme theories.

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<sup>40</sup> Billig, ‘The Extreme Right’, p.154.

<sup>41</sup> ‘How to wake people up around you’, *Stormfront*, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t528651/>, created 4 Oct 2008, accessed 18 May 2013.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Help for my brother’, *Stormfront*, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t828667/>, created 1 Sep 2011, accessed 16 May 2013. A later contributor agrees, arguing that “the jewish thing is for advanced [sic].”

Jews are not the only ones designated as puppet-masters (although they are by far the most common), with other conspiracy theory staples such as the Illuminati, Freemasons and the New World Order also referred to. Of these, all of which are at times conflated with Judaism, the New World Order is of most concern to the extreme right, similar to ZOG in its portrayal of a global elite seeking to establish global authoritarian rule. Subscribers to this theory, particularly in the United States, believe they are under surveillance from mysterious black helicopters, that road signs contain encoded messages to guide an impending invasion by the United Nations, and that in the new regime a whole class of people will be dedicated to providing organ replacements for the wealthy.<sup>43</sup>

However, these other conspiracy theories can also be made to conform to a larger anti-Semitic theory, in the same way that more focused conspiracy theories can be accommodated within a larger anti-Semitic framework. One of the most pervasive theories among the extreme right is the belief that the Holocaust, frequently referred to as the Holyhoax or Holohoax, did not occur but was a fabrication designed to elicit sympathy for Jews and thus lead to the establishment of Israel. Holocaust denial can vary in scale from outright denial to questioning the numbers of Jews killed, the cause of their death and denying that the Nazis had any official policy for Jewish extermination. Particularly important figures in Holocaust denial, which is generally referred to positively as “revisionism,” include “historians” David Irving, Arthur Butz (author of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*), Robert Faurisson and Richard Verrall (author, as Richard Harwood, of *Did Six Million Really Die?*). The Institute for Historical Review—co-founded by Willis Carto, who was co-owner of Resistance Records for a short period in 1998—presents itself as a scholarly body, having circulated the *Journal of Historical Review* until 2002, and now disseminates its material online. Bradley Smith, founder of the website Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (<http://codoh.com/>) and its associated forum, has targeted

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<sup>43</sup> Mark Potok, ‘The American radical right: The 1990s and beyond’, in Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, London & New York: Routledge, 2004, p.48.

his adverts at campuses through newspapers and online advertisements, justifying his claims in the terms of open debate and informing students that established professors refuse to engage with his arguments.<sup>44</sup> The use of pseudo-academics and journals to question the Holocaust is an example of the extreme right using the tools of academia in an attempt to lend a veneer of respectability to their views. The narrative of Holocaust denial has been adopted by many across the extreme right, with even leaders of ostensibly “modernised” parties forwarding such theories; BNP leader Nick Griffin and former FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen have both been prosecuted regarding comments they have made disputing the Holocaust.

It could be argued that Holocaust denial is intended to absolve the most notorious adherents of extreme-right politics, the Nazis, from any wrongdoing, and thus “cleanse” extreme-right politics of its negative connotations. While such motivation—conscious or unconscious—may play a part, it seems more likely that Holocaust denial sits alongside theories of Jewish control of media, economies and governments as the reason that more people cannot see the “truth” offered by extreme-right politics. As extreme-right ideology frequently embraces notions of supremacy and elitism, the lack of progress for extreme-right ideology is explained away as the result of an unlevel playing field, due to Jewish/Zionist control, particularly of media platforms, and subsequent tarnishing of extreme-right politics. Such control is also perceived in what might be called “lesser” conspiracy theories, which, although they can be detached from theories of Jewish control, are often seen as a component within the Zionist programme. Such conspiracies include the pushing of false climate change theories or even government control of the weather,<sup>45</sup> that terrorist attacks are in fact conducted by ruling elites in order to further their

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<sup>44</sup> Anti-Defamation League and Hillel, *Fighting Holocaust Denial in Campus Newspaper Advertisements: A Manual for Action*, New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Zaitchik, “‘Patriot’ Paranoia: A Look at the Top Ten Conspiracy Theories’, *Intelligence Report* No.139 Fall 2010, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2010/fall/patriot-paranoia?ondntsrc=MBC100870NWS&newsletter=newsgen-20100819#.UcQ4ZeD8G43>, accessed 6 May 2013.

agendas,<sup>46</sup> and, in America, that proposed gun control is a precursor to martial law and suspension of the constitution.<sup>47</sup>

Constituting such a significant space within extreme-right ideology, it is no surprise to find conspiracy theories, particularly anti-Semitic ones, providing the subject matter in much extreme-right music. Anti-Semitic conspiracies have been part of the extreme-right music scene from essentially its beginnings; Skrewdriver's first "political" album, *Hail the New Dawn* (Rock-O-Rama, 1984), included a pledge to "never submit to a six point master plan" in the title song, an apparent reference to the Star of David.<sup>48</sup> Anti-Semitic conspiracies and references to ZOG have remained popular throughout the years, with examples from the biggest extreme-right bands right through to relative unknowns. Among these are suggestions that the power of ZOG could be negated through the bombing of Israel (Angry Aryans, 'The Bombing of Israel', *Too White For You*, Resistance Records, 2002), that the media is in service to Jewish interests (Dirlewanger, 'Judiska Lögner', *Rocking for the Golden Race*, Rebelles Européens, 1989), and that the "lies" of the Holocaust will become reality (Der Stürmer, 'Marked for Genocide', *Bloodsworn: The First Decade*, Deathsquad Rex, 2008).

As the latter example suggests, Holocaust denial also constitutes an important narrative in extreme-right music, even as hatred of Jews, and fantasies about their destruction, are proclaimed. This is seen not only in lyrical content, with Prussian Blue—one of the few bands to receive any mainstream attention—claiming that their name derives from the apparent lack of colouring in gas chambers,<sup>49</sup> a popular

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. the subsection of *Stormfront* devoted to 9/11 theories, first entry on 12 Sep 2001, '9/11 Truth', *Stormfront*, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/f202/>, accessed 24 Jun 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Mark Potok, 'Once Again, Gun Control Spurs the "Patriots"', *Intelligence Report* No.149 Spring 2013, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2013/spring/once-again-gun-control-spurs-the-patriots#.UcYT1-D8G40>, accessed 22 Jun 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Kirsten Dyck, 'Race and Nation in White-Power Music', PhD Thesis, Washington State University, 2012, p.52.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Jesse Pearson, 'Hello, White People!', *Vice Magazine* (USA), Dec 2004, <http://www.vice.com/read/hello-v11n10>, accessed 22 Jun 2013.

argument among Holocaust deniers. Plentiful examples could be cited which conform to similar traits of extreme-right conspiratorial thinking, but another important aspect of conspiracism in extreme-right music is the portrayal of itself as a “pure” form. This is forwarded in part through the portrayal of the mainstream music industry as degenerate, but also as playing an active role in conspiracies.

### **Hidden Meanings and Feelings of Superiority**

As alluded to throughout this chapter, the extreme-right belief in conspiracy theories encourages a view of the world in which the majority of the population is a passive mass, potentially brainwashed, with extreme-right movements the sole hope of preventing a society of automatons. According to this perspective, the struggle is made harder by the pervasiveness of anti-extreme-right material, and the implied intellectual deficiencies of those who have not joined the cause.

Such an attitude is evident in the explanation of the galleries of Mourning the Ancient:

I think a lot of viewers understand the basics of it. But on an average much more do not I'm sure. Its irrelevant to us though really. One cannot expect the average drone to understand something deeper than his television. Which in a way motivated us to make the hidden galleries, to separate those who support and understand MTA from the others. It is those brave spirits whom Mourning the Ancient spills her blood for... and symbolically fights beside 'til the last.<sup>50</sup>

Here, hidden meaning is not a sign of a malignant conspiracy, but a tool for separating or recognising the elite, and marking it out as superior through its insight and insider knowledge. Clearly, this quote refers to a specifically visual medium, but Mourning the Ancient also works extensively with music (its own and that of other bands).

Such insight can be used to justify a liking for ideologically inappropriate material; this is particularly the case in justifying appreciation of bands and musicians of the mainstream music industry, who would generally be considered to

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<sup>50</sup> 'Interview with Mourning the Ancient', 16 Jan 1999, <http://www.angelfire.com/ak/tiagoblackmetal/mta.html>, accessed 16 Jan 2013.

be in the service of ZOG or similar. For instance, one *Stormfront* contributor argues that the lyrics of Iron Maiden have “camouflaged visions” of white nationalism, but “Only 0,000001% of listeners like myself can discuss his [sic] lyrics in political-racial means.”<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that opinion is split in responses to this theory, with some responders sympathetic and others dismissive, but the attitude of being able to see what the majority cannot is pervasive.

As well as marking themselves out through their insight and resistance to the conspiracies of the mainstream media, extreme-right supporters often contrast their own characters with those of the supposedly “degenerate” mainstream. The term “sheeple” is in common usage to refer to the “herd” who do not engage with extreme-right political ideas; one *Stormfront* contributor attempts to quantify the distinction, with no mention of sources or justification for his statistics:

I think the people most likely to join the WN [white nationalist] movement are intelligent and freethinking people, such as those with the INTJ personality type [introversion, intuition, thinking and judgement, as defined by the Myers-Briggs personality types]. That’s why 40% of the people on this forum are INTJ’s, even though INTJs are only about 1 percent of the general population. INTJ can see into the heart of matters, i.e. we don’t just think superficially. Also INTJ are the ones who least follow tradition and beliefs handed down from authorities and institutions. INTJ’s think for themselves. The most common personality group are the SJ guardians, and these are the most traditional people. They generally believe what their churches, schools, and other authorities and institutions tell them.<sup>52</sup>

As many on the extreme-right, certainly among the contributors to web forums, often appear to rely on assumptions more on evidence, musical preference is seen as one way of determining intelligence. A thread discussing the popularity of Nicki Minaj contains one such sweeping statement about relative intelligence and musical preference:

I don’t know what we as civilized citizens can do. It’s like going to the zoo and seeing apes throw \*\*\*\*\* [sic]. Even if you were to advise them of how

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<sup>51</sup> ‘Iron Maiden Lyrics: Nationalist, anti-ZOG and anti-commies!’, *Stormfront*, created 31 Mar 2009, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t586447/>, accessed 26 Jun 2013.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Why so many people are sheeple’, *Stormfront*, created 4 Mar 2011, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t784375/>, accessed 14 Jun 2013.

disgusting the behavior was, it probably wouldn't register with their small brains.<sup>53</sup>

Obviously such an opinion carries racial connotations, but the judgements commonly passed on white fans of “black” music, particularly hostility to “whiggers,” shows that musical preference is seen as indicative of intelligence. So, while extreme-right music remains utterly marginal in comparison with mainstream music—which supporters find so distasteful—they can console themselves with the knowledge that this is due to their own high standing, taste and discernment.

### **Constructing Conspiracies from Musical Moral Panics**

The term “moral panic” is credited to the British sociologist Stanley Cohen, and his 1972 book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. In Cohen’s definition a moral panic occurs when a “condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests.” Such panics can be inconsequential, but can also lead to changes in “legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself.”<sup>54</sup> This point should be emphasised; the use of the word “panic”—with its implications of uncontrollable anxiety and accompanying irrational behaviour—does not necessarily mean that the basis for a moral panic is unwarranted.

Generally speaking, there are two main fears which drive moral panics: that of the encroachment of decadence upon the dominant classes which threatens their position; and a fear that perceived immorality spreading through the lower classes is endangering dominant classes. In other words, moral panics are usually seen to threaten the very structure of society itself. Often these fears are predicated upon the behaviour of youth. Jon Savage’s book *Teenage*, a history of youth culture between 1875 and 1945, can be read as a history of moral panics and the efforts to protect

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<sup>53</sup> ‘The Double Standard on “Hoes” [sic]’, *Stormfront*, created 27 Jan 2012, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t862631-2/>, accessed 17 Jun 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Stanley Cohen [1972], *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*, Third Edition, London: Routledge, 2002, p.1.

youth from immorality,<sup>55</sup> while Johan Fornäs writes that youth's association with the future is frequently coupled with fear and "a culturally pessimistic diagnosis of degeneration."<sup>56</sup>

The generation gap integral to many moral panics is also integral to many of the youth-driven popular music scenes, themselves the frequent source of moral panics over the years, as Martin and Segrave portray in their description of rock's early days:

Rock music was the universal language of youth cutting across culture, race, religion, and politics. Islamic fundamentalists, liberal democracies, fascist dictatorships, or totalitarian communist governments had at least one thing in common—they believed rock was somehow subversive. This perhaps reinforces the idea that rock and roll is a generational conflict. It represents the idealistic, spontaneous, and nihilistic tendencies of youth versus the hypocritical, repressive, and traditional tendencies of adult society.<sup>57</sup>

While Martin and Segrave's assessment is a little black and white—regarding rock as a universal language of youth and as a somewhat utopian force—moral panics are often framed in such black and white declarations.

The emergence of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s was the source of a moral panic in certain circles, often involving prominent individuals. In 1956, the Bishop of Woolwich asserted that "the hypnotic rhythm and wild gestures [have] a maddening effect on a rhythm-loving age group," while the conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent claimed that the "primitive tom-tom thumping ... is capable of inciting youngsters to riot and fight."<sup>58</sup> Much of the criticism in the 1950s contained implicit racism with frequent references to "jungle" or "primitive" rhythms, a typical comment coming again from Sir Malcolm Sargent, who claimed that rock 'n' roll was not new as it "has been played in the jungle for centuries."<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the musical and lyrical

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<sup>55</sup> Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Johan Fornäs, 'Youth, culture and modernity' in Fornäs and Göran Bolin (eds.), *Youth Culture in Late Modernity*, London: SAGE Publications, 1995, p.1.

<sup>57</sup> Linda Martin and Kerry Segrave, *Anti-Rock: The Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll*, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1993, p.79.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.



features of rock 'n' roll which attracted such moralist ire were not entirely new, having widely circulated for a time in black music, but what triggered the outrage was that this music was now available to—and popular among—white teenagers.

While the critics of the 1950s often justified their attacks with recourse to the perceived moral and musical deficiencies of rock 'n' roll, the executive secretary of the segregationist North Alabama White Citizens Council was of a more conspiratorial persuasion. He claimed that rock 'n' roll was a plot by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to bring the white man “down to the level of the Negro,” and to serve the “cause of integration.”<sup>60</sup>

Similar narratives claiming that music is explicitly designed to forward multiculturalism, and that it has a debilitating and degenerative effect on whites, are evident in a series of articles that appeared in *Spearhead* magazine in the mid-1990s, under the editorship of then-leader of the British National Party, John Tyndall. Until his death in 2005 (just before he was due to face charges of incitement to racial hatred) Tyndall and other contributors articulated their hardline ideology through *Spearhead*, even as the BNP was being taken over by a new, modernising generation. The content of *Spearhead* should therefore not be seen as representative of the extreme right as a whole, but of one strand of thought which was particularly significant for being held by senior figures within the BNP at one time.

Musically speaking, *Spearhead* ideology consisted of a conservative taste for classical music, particularly German canonic composers and supposedly nationalist composers.<sup>61</sup> When popular music was addressed it was treated as a sign of cultural degeneracy; an article arguing for a firm adoption of eugenics policies posited that the average IQ in Britain had decreased since the war, as demonstrated by “Teenage morons, high on drugs, flocking to Bacchanal ‘raves’ [and] addiction to jungle-beat rap ‘music,’ which appeals to the very lowest instincts of human beings.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>61</sup> Philip Frampton, ‘The Forgotten Composer’, *Spearhead* No.299 Jan 1994, pp.12-13.

<sup>62</sup> *Spearhead* No.299 Jan 1994, p.13.

Such sentiments signal the belief that popular music is very much a primitive commodity, popular merely for its ability to appeal to the low and base instincts in the listener, and used by elites as part of a conspiracy to keep people docile. Colin Jordan, a long-time colleague of Tyndall and even more open about his National Socialist ideology, took this one step further in the article ‘Subversion Through Music.’ Jordan wrote:

There is a rhythm natural to Aryan men and women indicated by their breathing rate and heartbeat. Where the beat of “music” is speeded up much above the normal pulse rate per minute, tension is built up in the emotional system of the person participating to the deletrious [sic] point of what amounts to a hypnotic seizure of the mind. In this condition the critical faculties are overcome and suspended by the convulsions of the senses; reason collapses; and in this “hypnoid” state there is a greatly increased suggestibility. The implantation of words sung (or shouted or screeched) or indirectly by behaviour and display is greatly facilitated.... This amounts to a mugging of the mind. The purpose of the muggers is to break down barriers in the brain, and brainwash away distinctions of race and sex in youth to whom the future belongs, thus capturing that future ... [for] the revolutionary advance of multiracialism, Democracy’s zenith. Skinheads, while they may radiate and ingest a somewhat different message from that conveyed by ... minstrels of degeneration, nevertheless practise the same back-to-the-jungle method of mind-bending by primitive “music” plus primitive physical contortion as is used ... to promote [the] revolution of multiracialism. Whatever the difference of content, the mode of conveyance is virtually the same, the damage to personality just as bad, so that the skinheads, while fondly seeing themselves as rebels, are to be seen on this assessment as relatives of all the rest of the jungle “music” tribe.<sup>63</sup>

Jordan—who offers no evidence to substantiate his claims, and does not clarify the significant difference between rhythm in popular music and rhythm in, say, folk and classical music—offers no suggestions to combat this manipulation. It seems, rather, that this article is intended as a confirmation of the superior character of those who are resistant to this brainwashing, superior in particular to their ideological comrades, skinheads.

A follow-up article echoed a belief in the manipulative use of music by political elites: “One of the most pernicious forms of mind-numbing prole-feed used by our present political masters is the ugly cacophony known as ‘rock’ music.”<sup>64</sup> Another writer summed up the party line:

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<sup>63</sup> Colin Jordan, ‘Subversion Through Music’, *Spearhead* No.312 Feb 1995, p.14.

<sup>64</sup> Dr William Hurst, ‘The Psychology of Success’, *Spearhead* No.316 June 1995, p.15.

Rock, rap and rave cannot appeal to any rational or cultivated sensibility and are intended simply to excite. “Raving” is indeed a definition of a response expected of fans who are incited into making displays of collective hysteria and reduced to a condition of mindlessness in which they may be easily conditioned by the moguls of the media into believing that black is beautiful, white is racist, the third world is virtuous, and such like nonsense. It is for this reason amongst others that pop “culture” is not merely a worthless manifestation of decadence in society: it is also dangerous.<sup>65</sup>

This extract demonstrates the belief that popular music is capable of delivering highly specific messages, which are antagonistic towards the truths offered by the extreme right.

While the writers in *Spearhead* attacked all forms of popular music, their arguments are still apparent in discussions of more specific genres generally characterised as black. The characterisation of black people as innately primitive is very common, and their music—and black interaction with it—is seen as an obvious demonstration of this.<sup>66</sup> The popularity of this supposedly primitive and degenerate “black” music among white listeners, especially young ones, is viewed as evidence of a concerted conspiracy to indoctrinate them with certain political opinions. This belief relies on the notion that music has the ability to enact physical and mental changes within the listener in line with a political ideology, often on a subconscious level. In order for this brainwashing to take place, it is commonly assumed that music is part of a media hegemony controlled by elites, manipulated for their purposes and, most importantly, hostile to the extreme right and their cause.

### **Music as Part of the Partisan Media**

When Nick Griffin deposed Tyndall as BNP leader, part of his modernising agenda was to disavow the conservative elitism displayed by Tyndall and his colleagues, in an attempt to appeal to a populist base. The party’s own record label and festival used forms of popular music which were presented as family-friendly—to tie in with

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<sup>65</sup> James Mottram, ‘Music: Another Blast’, *Spearhead* No.320 Oct. 1995, p.16.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. ‘The Double Standard on “Hoes” [sic]’, *Stormfront*, created 27 Jan 2012, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t862631-5/>, accessed 17 Jun 2013.

the presentation of a modern BNP—and not at all the threat that Tyndall and his colleagues were so quick to identify. While popular music as a genre was no longer under attack, much of popular music was. The explanation for this is expressed by a lone dissenting voice in the *Spearhead* series of articles mentioned above, who wrote:

We stumble here of course into that old favourite of the BNP's enemies, the mass media. Just as this entity attempts to ensure that the party is, as far as possible, condemned to obscurity or trampled underneath a deluge of public hate, so it also suppresses news of rock music that could be construed, as worthy of some respect. Not only this, but it also promotes and nurtures all the worst trash in the field of rock and "pop" music.<sup>67</sup>

Since the BNP were releasing music stylistically similar to the mainstream (notably folk, pop and country), in this doctrine musical style is not at issue, but the subversive intention of producers, distributors and broadcasters is. Griffin, who acknowledges the need for the BNP to branch into popular music to gain wider appeal, wrote an article calling the media the number one enemy, for which reason he deems it essential to create a nationalist "counter-media and ... counter culture."<sup>68</sup> The typical extreme-right mistrust of the media is largely based on a belief that media hostility is part of an "Establishment consensus," and if extreme-right parties or movements were given a fair platform they would be able to convince the population of the worthiness of their cause. In essence, this conspiracy theory identifies the same goal as that diagnosed by Tyndall *et. al*—the spread of multiculturalism—but through a different manifestation of the cloaked conspiracy project: mainstream culture, rather than all popular music.

Of course, media coverage of the extreme right can be extensive, especially when parties are gaining support, but the parties themselves often complain of media bias in such reporting. One article previously published by the BNP claims that guidance given by the National Union of Journalists regarding reporting on race

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<sup>67</sup> David Topple, 'Music: An Alternative Viewpoint', *Spearhead* No.318 Aug 1995, pp.12-13.

<sup>68</sup> Nick Griffin, 'The Media: Number One Enemy', *Identity* No.74 Jan 2007, pp.16-18.

means that the BNP is always going to be portrayed in a negative light;<sup>69</sup> the party included policies designed to stop the BNP being “the victim of media lies and smears” in its 2005 manifesto.<sup>70</sup> While the BNP generally avoid citing conspiracy theories about media coverage, others are not so hesitant, pointing to the control of ZOG and the like.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, a significant part of the origin myth of Skrewdriver holds that “Marxist” media pressure, was the reason for their lack of success in the mainstream music industry,<sup>72</sup> while often the “black” music seen as detrimental to whiteness is claimed to be under Jewish control.<sup>73</sup>

The music industry is therefore, in the conspiratorial mindset, seen as promoting the agenda of interests opposed to extreme-right ideology. Pop music in particular is seen as promoting miscegenation, homosexuality and liberalism. This viewpoint is essentially the same as the “brainwashing” view of popular music, with media saturation achieving the same goal. Indeed, extreme-right discussions of the music industry, and other media, often do not make clear whether their subversive effect is due to psychological targeting designed to keep people in bondage or merely effective propaganda, although explanations seem to tend to the former.<sup>74</sup>

One important factor is the significant presence of non-whites in visible and successful roles in the music industry; given the belief in the inferiority of non-whites these positions are deemed to be unmerited and part of the programme to push a multi-racial agenda. For instance, one commenter suggests that the change of

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<sup>69</sup> Martin Wingfield, ‘The Media: Reporting on the BNP’, *The British National Party Website*, 16 Mar 2008, archived at <http://web.archive.org/web/20081211165521/http://bnp.org.uk/2008/03/the-media-reporting-on-the-bnp/>, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>70</sup> *Rebuilding British Democracy: British National Party General Election 2005 Manifesto*, Powys: 2005, p.9.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Max Hammer, *The Way Forward*, p.11.

<sup>72</sup> Joe Pearce, *Skrewdriver—The First Ten Years: The Way It’s Got to Be!*, London: Skrewdriver Services, 1987; *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. ‘Jews Behind Obscene & Degenerate Rap and Hip-Hop’, *Vanguard News Network Forum*, created 31 Aug 2007, <http://vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=66293>, accessed 25 Jun 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. various posts on music included in ‘How We Get Brainwashed!’, *Stormfront*, created 26 Oct 2007, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t432084/>, accessed 25 Jun 2013.

content on MTV is not a matter of changing taste, but part of an agenda on the part of the network:

MTV is much more destructive now than it was in the late 80s when [Allan] Bloom was writing, with Negro rappers having largely displaced White rockstars, and it is unquestionable that MTV, not incidentally but deliberately and openly, promotes ruinous choices for young White people.<sup>75</sup>

As such, successful non-white musicians are seen as the beneficiaries of promotion rather than rewarded for their talent or hard work, as in this comment about Rihanna:

It's obvious she is being promoted because she is a racial mix, there can't be any other reason for her celebrity.<sup>76</sup>

The instigation behind this promotion is assumed to be part of a Jewish conspiracy, with evidence apparently provided by the numerous Jewish and part-Jewish people in positions of prominence in the music industry.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, the mainstream music industry is seen, as with other media, as Jewish-controlled and operated to further a Zionist agenda. The promotion of non-white musicians is seen as part of this programme: since the quality of the musicians' work is perceived to be low, to say nothing of degenerate, it is asserted that they have been given prominence in order to serve a purpose. Similarly, the white musicians who are part of the music industry are assumed to be traitors through selling themselves to an anti-white business. As such, the extreme right are largely distrustful of the products of the mainstream music industry, as they are of mainstream media outlets in general. In order to promote their own "truth," therefore, the extreme right must disseminate their message through their own media outlets.

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<sup>75</sup> 'Alan Bloom on music', *Vanguard News Network Forum*, created 10 Oct 2005, <http://vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=24366>, accessed 20 Jun 2013, my emphasis.

<sup>76</sup> 'What do you think of Rihanna?', *Stormfront*, created 31 Oct 2012, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t922310/>, accessed 23 Jun 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Jewish figures in the music industry are compiled in various lists, notably 'Who Controls Music?', *Who Controls America?*, n.d., <http://thezog.wordpress.com/who-controls-music/>, accessed 24 Jun 2013; 'Jewish Faces', *Jew Watch*, n.d., <http://www.jewwatch.com/jew-entertainment-faces.htm>, accessed 24 Jun 2013.

## Establishing an Alternative Media and Music

In an attempt to convey their own side of the story to the world, the extreme right have expended much effort in establishing their own media. The distrust of news media is countered by the dissemination of extreme-right perspectives in newsletters, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and books; the information age has led to an explosion of such sources online, particularly through blogs and forums. As well as websites solely dedicated to reporting news from an extreme-right perspective, sites such as *Stormfront* and *Vanguard News Network* not only provide a source for the dissemination of links, stories and opinions, they provide a social space in which extreme-right politics is privileged and encouraged.

The value of social media is evident from the various groups created on sites like Facebook to promote aspects of the extreme-right cause, while alternatives to the “Jewish” Facebook, such as AWS Network (“A White Networking and Dating Community”) and NewSaxon (“A Social Networking Site for People of European Descent”) are also available.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Metapedia (<http://en.metapedia.org>) acts as a substitute for Wikipedia (the latter often referred to as “Jewipedia”), while Trutube (<http://trutube.tv>) is a video-hosting site designed to offer an alternative to YouTube or “JewTube.” The extreme right have even attempted to counter supposed Jewish influence in video games<sup>79</sup> through games such as *Aryan 3*, *Shoot the Black*, *White Power Doom*, *ZOG’s Nightmare 2*, and *Ethnic Cleansing*, which “draw both novice and longtime racists to interactive versions of Aryan racial extermination and white domination fantasies.”<sup>80</sup> Indeed, of the media commonly cited as under Jewish control, it seems only pornography has not been emulated by extreme-right activists, no doubt because it is generally perceived to be degenerate and immoral, although

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<sup>78</sup> <http://awsnetwork.org/>; <http://NewSaxon.org/>, both accessed 5 Jul 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. ‘Jews own most gaming companies’, *Stormfront*, created 19 Jun 2009, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t611481/>; ‘Who is behind all the violent video games? Jews.’, *Stormfront*, created 17 Dec 2013, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t932818/>, both accessed 5 Jul 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Pete Simi and Robert Futrell. *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement’s Hidden Spaces of Hate*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010, p.86.

even here the photo galleries of the website Mourning the Ancient could be seen to be fulfilling a similar function.<sup>81</sup>

The extreme-right music industry is a central part of the alternative media that the extreme right has sought to establish. Clearly, the music scene is intended to aid in the recruitment and mobilisation of support, the dissemination of extreme-right ideology and financial sustainability, but it is also intended as a bulwark against the mainstream industry, which is seen as actively working against extreme-right interests. Such a portrayal is evident in Final Truth's 'We Speak the Truth' (*We Speak the Truth*, Panzerfaust, 2004), which combines accusations of brainwashing—with the music industry reduced to MTV—with a messianic role on the part of the band, imparting truth and deliverance to the “brainwashed”:

It's thought control, imprisonment of the mind;  
Force-fed bullshit facts and lies;  
“Free your mind” you hear on MTV;  
And expand your thoughts with diversity;  
But your mind is not free if you're told what to think;  
Rather than expanding your mind starts to shrink;  
Mainstream or not my voice will be heard;  
And open up the eyes of the brainwashed blur.

Similarly, Bound For Glory's 'Musical Terrorists' (*Glory Awaits*, BFG Productions, 1997) conflates the mainstream industry with MTV:

We're rocking against the industry;  
You can kiss our ass MTV;  
...  
Turn off your radio, come and open your ears;  
Don't listen to that garbage that promotes hippies and queers.

The imperative to “come and open your ears” is indicative of the extreme-right belief in political “awakenings,” and the belief that they can engender such awakenings through the dissemination of their “truth” through their various media.

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<sup>81</sup> Mourning the Ancient, <http://www.mourningtheancient.com/index1.htm>, accessed 16 Jan 2013. On this website, see Andrew Fergus Wilson, 'From Apocalyptic Paranoia to the Mythic Nation: Political extremity and myths of origin in the neo-fascist milieu', in Marion Gibson, Shelley Trower and Garry Tregidga (eds.), *Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Identity*, London: Routledge, 2012, pp.199-215.



## Conclusion

The portrayal of the extreme right as conspiracy theorists by their enemies feeds into a portrayal of them as unhinged, unbalanced or delusional. However, the belief in conspiracies, especially on the part of political elites, is, according to statistics gathered on conspiracy belief (see above), actually in line with significant swathes of the population. While it is difficult to generalise given the proliferation of conspiracy theories on various different topics, they can act as a coping mechanism, portraying the world as controllable and providing justification for individual marginalisation.

In the case of the extreme right, Billig refers to “defensive attribution,” which:

occurs when people make attributions to protect their own sense of self-esteem and to justify their own apparent failings. Thus, instead of blaming themselves, people seek explanations which blame others for anything that has gone wrong. Firmly believing in the superiority of their own race or nation, conspiracy theorists are explaining why that nation or race is not behaving in a superior way.... [I]n the post-war years fascist ideologists explain away the minority status of their beliefs by claiming that people have turned against fascism because their minds have been subverted: they have been blinded by the “myth” of the Holocaust and other cunning devices.<sup>82</sup>

Not only does the conspiracist mindset justify the supposed marginalisation of extreme-right supporters—who can only conceive of their oppression as unnatural—but it complements wider distrust of elites.

Conspiracy theories allow complex issues and problems to be simplified down to a root cause, often a cause with malice aforethought, and consequently provides an enemy which if removed, removes the problem. For example, the commonly stated belief on the extreme right that immigration is intended—often by Jewish conspirators—to be a deliberate attempt to subjugate “indigenous” white populations not only provides a justification for perceived white marginalisation, but also a solution: removing the elites which allow uncontrolled immigration will allow the white race to rise again, while the removal of immigrant populations will lead to economic prosperity (and, implicitly, sexual purity).

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<sup>82</sup> Billig, ‘The Extreme Right: Continuities in Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory in Post-War Europe’, p.161.

Conspiracy theorising thus constructs a dichotomy of “us” and “them,” with mainstream music perceived in a similar manner, due to its promotion of liberal ideals at odds with extreme-right ideology. Furthermore, this notion of us and them is justified not only by the assertion that this mainstream music is objectively inferior, but also that it is deliberately constructed in this way for nefarious ends. So, popular music uses “primitive” beats and rhythms as well as repetition and motifs to better condition its listeners, to make them more receptive to brainwashing messages in support of multiculturalism in particular, and liberal ideas in general.

The identification of this supposed conspiracy behind popular music is significant; as with many conspiracy theories, it can provide the theorist with a sense of insight and superiority. By identifying the conspiracy, the theorist can feel superior to those who continue to be duped by it. Such a feeling is enhanced when theorists perceive themselves to be unaffected by the conspiracy, and therefore in possession of greater intellectual strength and capacity.

While conspiracy theories are important in constructing a sense of community among those who identify with them, conspiracy theories surrounding various media institutions are particularly important to the extreme right. Not only are media portrayed as politically partisan, they are claimed to be controlled by people who are actively working against the interests of the extreme right. Such opinions can function as mitigation for the lack of a wider appeal for extreme-right politics; rather than an fundamental failures in the ideology itself, blame is placed at the feet of the wider public, and the methods by which they are conditioned against extreme-right politics.

The prevalence of conspiracy theorising in extreme-right movements is a significant factor in the existence and justification of the extreme-right music scene, along with various other facets of extreme-right media. While extreme-right music provides a means of financing movements, propagandising and establishing a sense of community, it is also contrasted with the mainstream industry, a source of truth to counter subversive conspiracies. In this narrative, extreme-right music is an urgent

enterprise, since the conspiracies directed at the white race must be halted before the situation becomes irretrievable.

This use of conspiracy theories imbues extreme-right music with a moral character, working outside and against the subversive mainstream music industry, and untainted by its degeneracy. Liking for extreme-right music constructs an “in-group” which marks itself apart from the ordinary “sheeple,” with the music and its listeners portrayed as inherently superior. As with so many other aspects of extreme-right ideology and culture, therefore, conspiracist thinking provides those who might otherwise feel marginalised and isolated with a sense of superiority.

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **Genre and the Construction of Whiteness**

*“Come on boys, hear the white noise;  
Come on boys, hear the white noise;  
What you gonna do when it's too late?  
Let the stranger control your fate?  
Let all our music be taken away?”*

**Skrewdriver, ‘White Noise’, *Hail Victory*, Rock-O-Rama, 1994.**

*“We rock for white power, for a white society;  
And we don’t care about their rules;  
...  
We will keep on playing white race music;  
Until the final day;  
We will rock for white survival;  
For the survival of our race.”*

**Dirlewanger, ‘Rocking for the Golden Race’,  
*Rocking for the Golden Race*, Rebelles Européens, 1989.**

In his analysis of the Greek myth of Europe's origin, Johan Fornäs notes the whiteness of the bull whose form Zeus takes in his "relations" with Europa, providing "a mythical explanation to the fair skin colour of Europeans."<sup>1</sup> Despite this foundational myth of Europe linking its inhabitants with particular pigmentation, the racialisation—and, consequently, the "whiteness"—of Europeans is a more modern phenomenon. Alastair Bonnett contends that white racial identities are an essential part of modernity, and that modernity itself is racialised, particularly associated with European whites.<sup>2</sup>

While whiteness is an established feature of the modern world, white identities have not always been the sole preserve of those who are now described as white. Bonnett cites the socially contingent white identity in China:

[A]lthough there were no white *racial* identities in pre-modern China, there were white identities. In other words, certain Chinese people employed the category 'white' to help define which social collectivity they belonged to.... Whiteness was associated with purity, sensitivity and beauty.... Early encounters with Europeans do not appear to have disturbed Chinese white identities. Westerners were not interpreted as more authentically white than Chinese people. Indeed, many accounts emphasise the peculiar, ash-like, quality of the former's skins.<sup>3</sup>

Michael Keevak notes that early explorers rarely mentioned skin colour in their accounts of East Asia, and when they did they referred to them as white.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, whiteness was reserved for Europeans, and the later designation of East Asians as "yellow" was in part used to characterise a potential threat—the "yellow peril"—and to explain the assumed lesser-evolved nature of the newly categorised "Mongoloid" race. By the nineteenth century those with Mongolism (or Down syndrome) were equated with the "Mongolian" race, which was cast as a previous evolutionary stage; white people could therefore be "afflicted"

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<sup>1</sup> Johan Förnäs, *Signifying Europe*, Bristol: Intellect Books, 2011, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> Alastair Bonnett, *White Identities: Historical and international perspectives*. Harlow, Essex: Prentice Hall, 2000, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> Bonnett, *White Identities*, pp.9-11

<sup>4</sup> Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011, p.1.

with Mongolian traits because of ill-health or birth defects, but the yellow race was frozen in a permanent state of underdevelopment.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, early contact between Europeans and Middle Eastern peoples “did not destabilise Middle Eastern peoples’ white identities. Indeed, a range of colours was applied to ‘Europeans’, including white but also yellow, red and pale blue.”<sup>6</sup> These examples clearly demonstrate that white racial identity is not innate, and is the result of historical processes. However, today whiteness is primarily, perhaps solely, associated with European heritage.

Bonnett argues that the racialising project was a result of colonialism, a distinction made between the dominant and the subjugated, and was a blend of moral, cultural and territorial components.<sup>7</sup> This project was aided by the development of Darwinism, which had a profound effect on the understanding of the human race and on the development of extreme-right ideology. The practice of racism had sat uncomfortably within ideals of Christian brotherhood,<sup>8</sup> but Darwinism—particularly Social Darwinism—was interpreted to claim the existence of different races within humanity, with the white race claimed as the pinnacle of evolution. Darwinism was also used to argue that the white race was threatened by the prospect

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<sup>5</sup> Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, pp.6-7.

<sup>6</sup> Bonnett, *White Identities*, p.13.

<sup>7</sup> Bonnett, *White Identities*, p.17. The moral character of whiteness is particularly associated with Christian values, which have often expressed purity in terms of whiteness. In this context, the ascription of other races as “black” was also highly significant, with that colour having a history of association with the Devil. For an account of the meanings ascribed to blackness, mostly in non-racial contexts, see Michel Pastoureau, *Black: The History of a Color*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Some Christian ideologies have developed to account for the perceived differences between the races. The American group Christian Identity believes that non-whites are “evil incarnate and promote racial violence as acts ordained by God. They see blacks, Latinos, Asians, and other non-whites as lower-order subspecies of ‘pre-Adamic mudpeople’ and, therefore, not fully human. These beliefs are rooted in British Israelism, a nineteenth-century English ideology that posits that the true Israelites were Anglo-Saxons. Christian Identity adds to this interpretation the notion that Jews are descended from Satan and resulted from Eve’s copulation with the serpent.” Pete Simi and Robert Futrell, *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement’s Hidden Spaces of Hate*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010, p.12. The most prominent Christian Identity group was Aryan Nations.

of interbreeding and multiculturalism, and to claim that the oppression of other races by whites was simply part of the struggle of life under natural selection.

Extreme-right politics has generally been a politics of overt white supremacism based on this particular interpretation of Darwinism, often drawing heavily on Nazi theories of Aryanism. Although the modernised extreme right has attempted to distance itself from white supremacism, its rhetoric of cultural distinctiveness often draws on notions of whiteness as objective and under threat; despite this, the extreme right has had to contend with the relative status of whiteness as invisible. This chapter assesses the ways in which the extreme right—in both supremacist and distinctiveness rhetorics—has constructed whiteness as tangible, particularly through the various genres in which extreme-right musicians perform.

The chapter explores the meanings, significance and unmarked nature of whiteness, the way that popular music has been “raced” in mainstream discourses, before going on to analyse the extreme right’s own discourses and ideologies surrounding the “whiteness” or otherwise of various music genres. This approach demonstrates that extreme-right ideologies of race and racial identities in music are, while extreme, based on assumptions that are common in mainstream culture. Even so, the following examples reveal that, in dealing with the inherent contradictions and disagreements of race in music, the extreme right will always have difficulty in asserting particular genres as objectively “white.”

## **Whiteness and Race**

While academic scholarship has emerged undermining the idea of an objective measure of race<sup>9</sup>—and some scholars argued against race even before it became

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<sup>9</sup> As well as many of the works cited elsewhere in this chapter, see also Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; John H. Stanfield, ‘The Myth of Race and the Human Sciences’, *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol.64 No.3 (Summer 1995), pp.218-231; Jefferson Fish (ed.), *Race and Intelligence: Separating Science from Myth*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001; Joseph L. Graves, *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

scientifically questionable<sup>10</sup>—it would be foolish to assume that this has undermined the concept of race in everyday life. While scholarship argues that race is a socially constructed category, it is a significant and influential component within the societies that construct it, similar to the “imagined” communities of Benedict Anderson.<sup>11</sup> However, while race has generally been a crucial component in the portrayal of “non-white” peoples, it has generally been considered irrelevant—or at least subservient to categories of gender, class, sexuality and nation—in the construction of white identities.

The main goal of what has been called “White(ness) Studies” has been to draw attention to whiteness and its privileges, and to make clear its socially-constructed nature. Perhaps the most famous exegesis of white privilege is Peggy McIntosh’s ‘White Privilege,’ which methodically lists a number of unspoken benefits accrued by whites which cannot be taken for granted by other ethnicities.<sup>12</sup> Similar perspectives have drawn attention to the unspoken position of power held by whiteness, whether in fields such as literature and film or in political parties.

Another goal of whiteness studies has been to draw attention to the way in which whiteness masks itself as normal, and therefore unworthy of consideration:

Whiteness colonizes the definition of the normal and subsequently achieves a complete disavowal of ethnic categorization. Thus *Brief Encounters* is never studied as a film about white people, but rather as a film about English middle-class people; similarly, *The Godfather* is mostly studied as a film about Italian American people. By contrast, *The Color Purple* is not studied as a film about poor southern U.S. people but about black people.<sup>13</sup>

In a similar vein, musical genres are often described as “black” in a way which essentialises them as an expression of a whole ethnicity, rather than dependent on

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<sup>10</sup> Jacques Barzun, *Race: A Study in Superstition* [1937], Second Edition, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1965.

<sup>11</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, London: Verso, 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Peggy McIntosh, ‘White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack’, *Peace and Freedom* Jul/Aug 1989, pp.10-12.

<sup>13</sup> T. Muraleedharan, ‘Rereading *Gandhi*’, in Frankenberg (ed.) *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997, p.61.



factors such as economics, place, time and cultural exchange. In contrast, genres that could as easily be described as “white” as some are called “black” are usually defined by other characteristics, such as class, geography, economics, or sexuality. So punk is often studied (particularly in a British context) in terms of class and politics, metal in its portrayal of masculinity, country in terms of the socioeconomic status of its fans and musicians.

The concept of “white” music is relatively foreign; for instance, “w(h)igger” (an alteration of “nigger”) refers to white emulation of black fashions and language, particularly hip-hop, while “blue-eyed soul” makes an indirect reference to whiteness in a supposedly black medium. However, while white music is something of a misnomer, there is certainly a conception of whiteness *in* music, albeit generally in the context of blackness. This is shown by genre labels such as “blue-eyed soul,” but also from stereotypes of black and white responses to music.

The embedded nature of these stereotypes is shown by an anecdote in which film scholar Richard Dyer most strongly experiences his whiteness, significantly in a musical environment:

Living in New York at the time (1980), I went out dancing a lot with black friends to black venues; I had a black music radio station on all the time; I could not have been more into it. At one mixed-race social event, we all started dancing in a formation copied from the TV series *Soul Train*, two lines facing each other, which we took it in turns to dance down between. For all my love of dancing and funk, I have never felt more white than when I danced down between those lines. I know it was stereotypes in my head; I know plenty of black people who can’t dance; I know perceptions of looseness and tightness of the body are dubious. All I can say is that at that moment, the black guys all looked loose and I felt tight.... I felt it, I hated it, dancing between the lines—and hated it not for itself, but because it brought home to me that, in my very limbs, I had not the kinship with black people that I wanted to have.<sup>14</sup>

The association of black music with the body has a long history, and is often conflated with primitivism connected to a focus on rhythm. Black music is situated as the opposite of white values of music, which are asserted as more cerebral and considered. The contingent nature of these racialized identities is underlined by Ruth

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Dyer, *White*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p.6.

Iana Gustafson, who suggests that “musical values associated with whiteness took their social heft from comparisons to abject blackness.”<sup>15</sup>

Such attitudes have become embedded throughout the 20th century in the marketing and perception of popular music. A particularly common argument has been that black culture has historically been innovative in popular music and that whites appropriate and exploit. According to one writer: “Blacks create then move on. Whites document and then recycle. In the history of popular music, these truths are self-evident.”<sup>16</sup> Such an argument could be justified by pointing to black originators in various diverse and influential styles and genres, such as jazz, rock and hip-hop. However, examples such as this often make these claims in racial rather than cultural terms, implying or underlining a belief in innate racial differences which, as well as sustaining essentialist ideology, provides mainstream confirmation of the extreme-right belief in fundamental racial difference.

Of course, even if racial essentialism ought to be denied, it should not be forgotten that racial segregation, profiling and pride will play a part in the development of musical communities and culture.<sup>17</sup> Race is, after all, the tying of meaning to particular skin tones, face shapes etc.; the very existence of such meanings can have an enormous effect on social interactions and hierarchies. However, all too often the language of race oversimplifies the complexities of popular music, and often reduces complex histories to simple binaries, as persuasively argued by Les Back and Vron Ware:

Critics and writers seem obsessed with reducing white involvement in black music to a very limited range of archetypal possibilities. This relationship is characterized variously as the return of the black-faced minstrel, jazz-obsessed hipsters and white Negroes who want “to be black,” or latter-day hip-hopping Wiggers (i.e., “white niggers”) who dream of the Hood from the safety of the vanilla suburbs. Another archetype ... is the conniving and parasitic whites,

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<sup>15</sup> Ruth Iana Gustafson, *Race and Curriculum: Music in Childhood Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, xiv.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, London: Omnibus Press, 1988, p.108.

<sup>17</sup> For a particularly sensitive discussion of how the shared outsider status of Jews and African-Americans in the USA affected their position and contributions to popular music, see Michael Billig, *Rock 'n' Roll Jews*, Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2000.

record producers and company executives, who cream off the profits and exploit black creativity.... [S]uch prototypical images of love and theft conceal the diversity of white involvement in black music. It has been all too easy to characterize the encounters and dialogues involving white musicians in such terms. Distinctions among musicians, studio owners, producers, and songwriters are elided within the language of appropriation.<sup>18</sup>

So, while there are many examples which, even in a seemingly racialised world, dispute the pervasiveness and significance of race in, in this case, the creation of popular music, the way that the language of race has become embedded in the discourses surrounding popular music allows ethnic groups to be characterised as homogeneous in their relation and contribution to popular music and to each other.

A further embedding of a black and white divide in popular music is evident in its marketing. Karl Hagstrom Miller has described how music of the southern USA during racial segregation was not unique to any ethnic or cultural group, but rather became isolated along race lines during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Miller shows how a variety of forces—including scholars, musicians, producers, consumers, and particularly the marketing of music by record labels—played a role in compartmentalising popular music according to race.<sup>19</sup> Broadly speaking, the blues became the genre of African Americans, while country music was associated with whites. However, the labels originally used for describing this distinction reveal much of the way race is conceived in music; blues was called “race” music, and country “hillbilly” music.

The depiction of hillbilly music portrayed its musicians as poor, white, and happy in their exclusion from urban culture. Race music, meanwhile, while arguably specifically referring to southern black music, is a description which presumes the presence of race is description enough, simultaneously associating the characteristics of a regionally and socio-economically specific music with an entire ethnicity. It is also notable that the term “race” was used, rather than, say, “black,” indicating

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<sup>18</sup> Les Back and Vron Ware, *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p.230.

<sup>19</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

another example in which whiteness is unsaid and unmarked. Such a distinction may also have contributed to a notion that black music is fundamentally different, fundamentally the Other, to white culture, a notion certainly espoused by the extreme right.

It is because of the particular significance of imagined blackness in the construction of musical white identities, as well as the preoccupations of extreme-right musicians and supporters, that this chapter will assess whiteness in the context of blackness. Certainly, there are musics associated with Asians, Arabs, and insufficiently white Europeans,<sup>20</sup> but these are nowhere near as important to the construction of whiteness as blackness is, both in and outwith extreme-right ideologies. For this reason, I do not consider it necessary to use the umbrella term “non-white” in this chapter.<sup>21</sup>

It is not my intention here to assert some genres as white in a similar way to genres that are commonly understood as black. In my opinion, labelling genres in this way is a form of essentialism which ignores the lack of scientific basis for racial categorisation, as well neglecting the cultural cooperation often involved in the origin of genres. In other words, calling a genre black or white implies, for better or worse, that it “belongs” to a group of certain pigmentation, that it is defined by the group and that the group can be defined by it.<sup>22</sup> In addition, even if genres can be traced back to what we commonly understand as black or white origins, all genres—particularly popular—involve a blend of influences that cannot be distilled into a single characteristic, be it class, ethnicity, nationality, or colour. So while this chapter examines the way that extreme-right groups perceive certain genres to be white or

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<sup>20</sup> Insufficiently white generally encompasses Mediterraneans, Hispanics and Eastern Europeans. See Chapter One’s discussion of Nordicism.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the problematic but necessary use of the term “non-white,” see Dyer, *White*, p. 11 and Ruth Frankenberg, ‘Introduction: Local Whitenesses, Localizing Whiteness’, *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997, pp. 1-33.

<sup>22</sup> For example, the alleged degeneracy of hip-hop is seen by white supremacists as evidence of the inferiority of the entire black race.

black, this is not to argue that certain genres *are* white or black; it is to examine the varied ways in which the extreme right construct whiteness, and how different musics are accommodated into their ideologies.

The “invisible” or “unmarked” nature of whiteness has proved problematic for white supremacists, or those who wish to assert white culture and tradition as independent and demonstrable. In presenting whiteness as under threat, the extreme right must first assert or prove the existence of a unified white race. As the following examples show, this has been a problematic process with mixed results.

### **Classical Music and Elite Culture**

There is a particular strand of extreme-right ideology that is purely interested in classical music, seeing it as a pinnacle of white achievement, while deriding popular music as base and degenerate. This belief appears to draw heavily on the cultural ideology of Nazism and the Nietzschean idea of the gifted individual transcending the masses. Given its elitist nature, it is no surprise that this particular musical ideology is mostly found in pre-modernised movements; while modernised movements do still promote classical music, they are careful to avoid presenting it in such an obviously elitist manner.

Perhaps the most comprehensive examples of constructing classical music as white are found in the magazine *Spearhead*, edited by John Tyndall, then leader of the BNP. The articles on classical music seem to be intended dually as educational and improving material for readers, and an assertion of the particular achievements of the white race. The educational approach is particularly evident in this excerpt, which urges readers to “discover” classical music:

Your classical voyage will open up a thousand years of European genius. Together with your imagination, it will give you the gift of seeing, perhaps for the first time, a race-greatness that will offer sanctuary from decadence. It will also remind you that this generation faces the greatest responsibility of all. The Armageddon is already being fought. The battle for white survival will be won

or lost during the next fifty years. This music, *our* music, *your* music, is just another expression of white achievement which is worth fighting for.<sup>23</sup>

The implication here is clearly that familiarity with classical music will improve and refine the individual. It is unsurprising that Tyndall and his circle were hostile to successful extreme-right popular musics, and hoped to improve the image of their movement by teaching skinheads the pleasures of the classical canon. But the primary function here is music as motivator; the argument moves quickly from classical music as a work of genius to a heritage which must be fought for. In other passages, the role of classical music as incitement to action is the sole emphasis:

Anyone whoever doubts the fundamental destiny of the white race should listen to the fourth movement of Beethoven's ninth (choral) symphony, Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* or Verdi's *Requiem*. Then let them say whether the white race is worth fighting for!<sup>24</sup>

The language of these examples makes clear that classical music is not seen as the preserve of a privileged elite; rather it is seen as belonging to the white race. This belonging proves the superiority of whiteness, and simultaneously demonstrates the reason why the race must be fought for.

Although the first writer plainly states that a “classical voyage will open up a thousand years of European genius,” in practice the time period is not as broad as that. In *Spearhead*, the focus is on Romantic composers, particularly Wagner and Verdi, as well as English composers such as John Ireland who are viewed by contributors as being unfairly neglected due to their “nationalist” outlook.<sup>25</sup> The Resistance Records website, in its use of composers to provide inspirational quotes, restricts itself to the giants of the Germanic canon: Beethoven, Wagner, Mozart and Bach. The quotes—on the Featured Artists page alongside adverts for bands such as Angry Aryans, Kremator and Definite Hate—imply the necessity that activists familiarise themselves with the classical canon in order to better themselves and their

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Walsh, ‘Reclaim your cultural heritage!’, *Spearhead* No.337 March 1997, p.13, Walsh’s emphasis.

<sup>24</sup> Dr William Hurst, ‘The Psychology of Success’, *Spearhead* No.316 June 1995, p.15, Hurst’s emphasis.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Frampton, ‘The Forgotten Composer’, *Spearhead* No.299 Jan 1994, pp.12-13.

understanding of the white cause. Beethoven addresses the function of music as inspirer (“Music should strike fire from the heart of man, and bring tears from the eyes of woman.”), Mozart emphasises the importance of being true to oneself (“I pay no attention whatever to anybody’s praise or blame. I simply follow my own feelings.”) while Bach underlines the importance of work ethic and application (“I worked hard. Anyone who works as hard as I did can achieve the same results.”). The influence of Nazism in this choice is clear in the quote on Wagner, which is actually from Adolf Hitler: “Whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must know Wagner.”<sup>26</sup> This last quote emphasises that Resistance’s origins lie with Nazism and that the essence of Nazism is found in Wagner; hence supporters will appreciate the nature of white supremacism all the more through their engagement with classical music.

### **The High/Low Divide**

Classical music is of course notorious for being a canon of works by dead white males. One can point to a handful of female or non-white figures but, particularly before the 20th century, it is a canon which has strong resonances with extreme-right ideals of patriarchy and ethnicity. Within this context, it becomes crucial to construct this music as white, rather than as a product of particular societies or privileged individuals. Occasionally, this is framed in the context of a historical comparison of the cultural products of non-white societies with Western Europe, the Other then

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Featured Artists’, *Resistance Records*, <http://resistance.com/featured/>, accessed 1 June 2012.

being dismissed as backward or primitive.<sup>27</sup> The most common approach, however, is to posit classical music as “white” and in opposition to the “black,” “negroid” or “jungle” nature of popular music.

The rhetoric of race has largely informed much of the distinction between “high” and “low” culture in the 20th century. While the high/low distinction has been traced to at least mediaeval times<sup>28</sup>—as a differentiation between elite and popular tastes—the increasing influence of black culture on popular music in the 20th century led to racial flavouring of the argument. Rhythmic emphasis, and its associations with sexuality and base human instincts, was contrasted with the more cerebral appreciation and introspection of the concert hall. Simon Frith—who has argued that bodily response to rhythm is anything but “brainless”—traces these prejudices to the Romantic history of defining African culture as “the body, the other of the bourgeois mind”.<sup>29</sup> “[H]ow rhythms are read,” Frith asserts, “is a matter of cultural, not musical politics.”<sup>30</sup> In this context, it becomes clear that the attack on emergent popular musics was a reaction to the transgression of a black aesthetic upon white cultural dominance.

The terms used by BNP writers in the mid-1990s (quoted in full in the previous chapter) indicate a racialised perception of popular music: “jungle

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<sup>27</sup> This is not solely restricted to music, with comparisons of fine art, and political achievements and expansion also extant, for instance in the often-quoted passage: “It was the White Race who produced men like Columbus who crossed the unknown Atlantic; men like Magellan who first circumnavigated the globe; men like Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Velazquez, Bernini, Rubens, Raphael and thousands of other geniuses who created beautiful and exquisite productions in the fields of sculpture and painting; geniuses like Beethoven, Bach, Wagner and Verdi who created beautiful music; men like James Watt who invented the steam engine; men like Daimler who invented and built the reciprocating internal combustion engine; production geniuses like Henry Ford, inventors like Thomas Edison; such a prodigal genius as Nikola Tesla in the field of physics and electricity; literary geniuses like Shakespeare, Goethe and thousands of others, untold geniuses in the fields of mathematics, in the fields of chemistry and physics.... In contrast, the black man of Africa never so much as even invented the wheel.” Ben Klassen, *Nature's Eternal Religion*. Lighthouse Point, FL: Creativity Publishing, 1973, p.12.

<sup>28</sup> Ulf Boëthius, ‘The history of high and low culture’, in Johan Fornäs and Göran Bolin (eds.), *Youth Culture in Late Modernity*, London: SAGE Publications, 1995, pp.13-16.

<sup>29</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p.127.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.



‘music,’”<sup>31</sup> “mind-numbing prole-feed,”<sup>32</sup> “monotonous monophonic drivel.”<sup>33</sup> These attacks from conservatives dismiss popular music entirely, making no distinction between black and white within it. American terrorist David Lane, who does make a distinction between white and black practices, still sees classical music as the salve for the problems facing the white race:

[W]hen we had our own nations, our dance was stately and orderly. The Virginia reel, waltz and square dance are examples. Dancing was a kind of refined courtship. The Negroidal frenzy dancing of this age is simulated copulation, not courtship. This simulated copulation is usually accompanied by some cacophony, wrongfully called music, which invariably is played at a decibel level designed to attract the attention of aliens on some distant planet. The thumping of synthesized instrumentation drowns out any vocal lyrics, which indeed have no redeeming value anyway.... How I wish young White people would or could, hear or see productions by Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Strauss, Beethoven, Rossini, Verdi and the other great Aryan composers. The 1812 Overture, the William Tell Overture and the Tannhauser Overture are Aryan culture at their finest. And 99% of today’s youth haven’t a clue. It is not their fault and it is oh-so-sad. But the alien destroyer knows that the further a generation is removed from its own culture, the less it cares about the preservation of the race from which it sprang.<sup>34</sup>

For these ideologues, contemporary popular music does not constitute part of the heritage of the white race. However, attempts to make the extreme-right a haven of classical music have largely failed, and even those who espouse this ideology have come to accept the economic realities of the extreme-right music scene. In its later years, *Spearhead* began to carry adverts for CDs and BNP benefit concerts performed by extreme-right bands,<sup>35</sup> while David Lane said this on the subject of extreme-right rock:

I am overjoyed at the success we are seeing with the White Power bands. I must confess that I don’t understand the phenomenon, since my preference runs to Wagner and Tchaikovsky, but the music enjoyment of us dinosaurs is of no importance. White Rock seems to reach and unify our young folk, and that is the first good news in decades.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Colin Jordan, ‘Subversion Through Music’, *Spearhead* No.312 Feb 1995, p.14.

<sup>32</sup> Hurst, ‘The Psychology of Success’, p.15.

<sup>33</sup> David Topple, ‘Music: An Alternative Viewpoint’, *Spearhead* No.318 Aug 1995, p.13.

<sup>34</sup> David Lane, ‘Counterfeit Culture’, in *Collection of Works of David Lane*, n.p., n.d., pp.292-3.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Spearhead* No.356 Oct 1998 pp.4-5, No.358 Dec 1998 p.19.

<sup>36</sup> *Liberty Bell*, Vol.23 No.5 Jan 1996, p.43.

Given the success of extreme-right music—both financially and in terms of its popularity in the movement—some have seen it necessary to justify the presence of particular genres within extreme-right ideology. This has proven difficult, not only because of the multicultural origins of most popular music genres, but because ideological adaptation tends to occur after the event, and there is a lack of consensus within the extreme right as to what are appropriate genres.

### **What's white?**

The desire to capitalise on the economic potential of music has frequently appealed to extreme-right groups, who see it not only as a source of possible income, but as an opportunity to assert and disseminate their ideology. The reasoning behind this is well demonstrated in the following letter to the BNP magazine *Identity*, regarding the establishment of Great White Records:

At the BNP leadership conference held at the start of July, the party's National Cultural Officer, Jonathan Bowden, gave an inspirational talk on the importance of our working to revitalise areas of traditional and Politically Incorrect British culture, and co-opt them to our political and ideological war against the liberal-left drive to deculturalise and destroy our nation. This is the theoretical side of a project which Nick Griffin and a small team of musicians have been developing behind the scenes in recent months: To create a nationalist recording label to produce musical and other CDs promoting in a sensible way our political message and/or traditional British and Western culture.... Everything from folk music to rock and classical piano is on the agenda. Quite simply, if it springs from British and Western roots, if we can find the artists, and if some of our people want to listen to it, we intend to produce and sell it.<sup>37</sup>

However, it is not a straightforward process to designate particular genres as ideologically sound; some of the complexities involved in this are outlined in this passage, again from *Identity*:

the would-be cultural wing of a nationalist revival was largely centred on a musical form and arrangement of musical instruments that was a product of mid-to-late-twentieth century America—the greatest influence in the destruction of popular traditional white culture from Dixie to the Ural Mountains. Classical music buffs who derided it as 'black jungle noise' were well wide of the mark, but so were those who tried to claim the music as 'white.' The truth is that most of the pop music of the second half of the last century had a mixture of black and white origins. And, wherever it came from, its total rejection of so many of the instruments, melodies and influences of traditional (i.e. pre-approximately

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<sup>37</sup> Letter from David Hannam, *Identity*, No.45 July 2004, p.21.

1940) European music made it a potent factor in the deculturalisation and psychological uprooting of generations of young whites. So what was to be done? The prescription of the elderly purists—to write-off a whole lifetime’s worth of music and get everyone listening to classical waltzes, Wagner or original recordings of long-dead folk singings—was an obvious non-starter.<sup>38</sup>

This article, published in 2001, outlines the imagined development of nationalist music and describes this narrative as if from the future. In this article, the music scene has overcome its problems and ideological contradictions and emerged as something truly white (described throughout as “White Roots Music”). The article claims this has been achieved through the revival of “songs that were sung in pubs or on army route marches or on sailing ships for generations,” as well as through the use of:

long-neglected traditional instruments. Electric guitars and rock drum kits remained at the centre of the music, but tin whistles, bagpipes, fiddles and related instruments, bodran and even Ulster’s huge lambeg war drums all began to feature as well. Some bands experimented with the enormous potential of modern electronic synthesiser keyboards to produce contemporary sound versions of everything from accordions to church organs.<sup>39</sup>

Despite outlining the ways in which an apparently authentically white musical culture can be created, the hopes of the manifesto have not been realised. The vast majority of extreme-right musicians still play in the genres that were popular in the mid-1990s, although there is certainly more variety than there was then, even if not to the extent of incorporating the bodran or lambeg.

A simple way of accommodating popular music within white supremacist ideology is to claim white origins for genres commonly thought of as non-white. This is the approach of a contributor to Stormfront, under the alias “Fight the Racists,” in a thread which, like the poster’s alias, is based on the assumption that the most widespread victims of racism are white people:

White people are responsible for the creation of many of the most popular forms of music. White people created the blues, jazz, rock and roll and rap music. White liberals and blacks often falsely credit blacks with the accomplishments of white people. For example, they claim blacks invented the traffic light, the blood bank and air conditioning when these things were invented by whites.

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Building a Nationalist Music Alternative’, *Identity*, No.18 March 2002, pp.8-9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

They do the same thing with music. They claim blacks created the blues, jazz, rock and roll and rap and that white people “stole” this music from blacks. If there was any stealing done it was done by blacks from whites. The blues came from the British Isles. An early blues song is Greensleeves. Greensleeves is a song about a man who was taken advantage of by a woman and then rejected. It dates from the late 1500s. The first recorded jazz song was Livery Stable Blues by the Dixieland Jass Band, recorded in 1917. Band member Nick Larocca claimed to have invented jazz and his music is the first known examples of it. Rock and roll is often claimed to be speeded up blues. This claim ignores the influence of white country music in rock and roll. Either way rock and roll developed from white music. The first known recorded example of a rock and roll song is Move It On Over, recorded by Hank Williams in 1947. It was the template for songs such as Rock Around the Clock and Roll Over Beethoven. Oh, and the term “rock and roll” was used by whites in the 1800s. For example, it was mentioned in one of the Little House On the Prairie books, set around 1880. It probably refers to the motion of trains. Black supremacists try to credit blacks with inventing the term, using a preposterous explanation. Rap was being done by whites in the 1920s. The first recorded rap song was recorded in 1927 by Swedish artist Evert Taube. It was called Kinesiska Muren. Don't believe what I say? Listen to the songs yourself. Are you going to believe black supremacist, anti-white propagandists or your own ears?<sup>40</sup>

It is not difficult to dispute the examples cited by “Fight the Racists,” and this is one of the criticisms from his fellow Stormfront posters, such as “Trenchcoater”: “It’s all hearsay. I can say my grandfather was rapping in the 1800’s [sic]. Doesnt [sic] mean it’s true or he was the first. Move on, there [are] non-whites who have accomplished things like rap, obviously mediocre, but still we dont [sic] need credit for everything.” While some respondents are receptive, even pointing to an American academic’s claim that rap battles are based on an old Scottish tradition of “flyting,”<sup>41</sup> others do not want whites to claim credit for what they see as inferior practices. For instance, “Let them keep the garbage called rap” and “Blacks can have the blues if they want, it’s no good. It was made 100 times better by bands like the Rolling Stones.”

As these latter posts suggest, there is a desire to maintain the “inferior” status of some genres in order to demonstrate the inherent superiority of the white race; in order to consolidate the sense of community in “us,” there must be an easily

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<sup>40</sup> ‘White People Invented the Blues, Jazz, Rock and Roll and Rap’, *Stormfront*, created 18 Feb 2012, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t867072/>, accessed 19 Jun 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Simon Johnson, ‘Rap music originated in medieval Scottish pubs, claims American professor’, *The Telegraph*, 28 Dec 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/3998862/Rap-music-originated-in-medieval-Scottish-pubs-claims-American-professor.html>, accessed 19 Jun 2012.

identifiable “them,” and a fundamental component in the construction of this binary is the belief in genres as identifiably, and authentically, “white” or “black.” However, the ambiguities of racial origins, as well as differing tastes and aesthetics within the extreme right, mean that this has been a difficult and often contradictory process. What is dismissed as “black” or “jungle music” by some will be held up as a shining example of white supremacy by others. These contradictions highlight the constructed nature of whiteness, and the difficulties the extreme right face in attempting to ascribe objective qualities to it.

### **Punk and Oi!**

As outlined in Chapter One, the extreme-right music scene emerged from British punk. Punk has been cited as “Year Zero” for a number of cultural developments:

Punk briefly united a motley array of malcontents as a force *against*. But when the question shifted to “What are we *for*?” the moment/movement disintegrated and dispersed, each strand nurturing its own creation-myth of what punk meant and its own vision of where to go next.<sup>42</sup>

These various strands are generally grouped under the umbrella term “post-punk”, but of particular relevance here is Oi!, the foundational genre of extreme-right music, which was proclaimed as the authentic version of punk. There were a number of factors which facilitated the appropriation of punk by the extreme right. Punk’s rhetoric of anti-elitism, as well as the presentation of Oi! as the authentic culture of the street in opposition to “art school” mainstream punk, was well suited to the rhetoric of the National Front as representatives of the working class. Punk provocatively appropriated Nazi symbolism as well; the swastika became something of a fashion accessory, while wartime imagery was often referenced. Sid Vicious famously wore a T-shirt with a swastika on it, while Joy Division’s name referred to prostitutes in concentration camps. Nazi symbolism was also used in song names, such as The Residents’ ‘Third Reich ’n’ Roll,’ Luxus’ ‘Auschwitz’, and The Cretins’

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<sup>42</sup> Reynolds, *Rip it Up*, xxix-xxx, Reynolds’ emphasis.

‘Dachau Disco.’<sup>43</sup> Siouxsie Sioux from Siouxsie and the Banshees excused her own use of the swastika as “high camp,” while the band encountered controversy for the line “Too many Jews for my liking” in the song ‘Love in a Void,’ which was explained as shorthand for “too many businessmen.”

Dick Hebdige has addressed the use of the swastika by punks directly:

Conventionally, as far as the British were concerned, the swastika signified “enemy.” None the less, in punk usage, the symbol lost its “natural” meaning—fascism. The punks were not generally sympathetic to the parties of the extreme right.... We must resort, then, to the most obvious of explanations—that the swastika was worn because it was guaranteed to shock.... The signifier (swastika) had been willfully detached from the concept (Nazism) it conventionally signified, and ... its primary value and appeal derived precisely from its potential for deceit. It was exploited as an empty effect.<sup>44</sup>

While this is probably true for some, perhaps the majority, of those punks who appropriated Nazi symbolism, there were certainly those who used and understood these activities unironically. Admittedly, even Skrewdriver’s early use of the swastika has been interpreted as conforming to Hebdige’s interpretation,<sup>45</sup> but punk’s process of making Nazism “fashionable” may have contributed to the confidence the developing extreme right felt in openly displaying their extremist views through such symbolism.

Although the extreme-right brand of Oi! quickly became associated with the white supremacist ideology of its practitioners, it was drawing on the particular association punk had established with whiteness. Through the activities of Rock Against Racism (RAR), punk became invested with a liberal/left-leaning ideology, as well as anti-racism. However, RAR concerts were generally segregated, with blacks represented by reggae bands, whites by punks. This segregation was not absolute, with RAR particularly influential in the development of 2-Tone (see below). At the same time, Asians—who were the main victims of racism in Britain, particularly the

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<sup>43</sup> Alenka Barber-Kersovan, ‘German Nazi Bands: Between Provocation and Repression’, in Cloonan and Garofalo, *Policing Pop*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003, p.199.

<sup>44</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style*. London: Routledge, 1979, pp.116-7.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Roger Sabin, “‘I won’t let that Dago by’”: Rethinking punk and racism’, in Sabin (ed.), *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*. London: Routledge, 1999, pp.213-4.

skinhead practice of “Paki bashing”—were almost ignored, particularly at a national level; one Asian band, Alien Kulture played at a RAR event, also releasing a single and album to little mainstream attention. Not only did this leave many Asian fans feeling that the movement was ignoring their concerns,<sup>46</sup> but hostility towards them was not limited to those musicians explicitly identifying with extreme-right politics; for instance Bernie Rhodes, manager of the Clash, said in an interview that “There’s a lot of Pakis that deserve it” when the subject of anti-Asian violence came up.<sup>47</sup>

As well as the ethnicity of its practitioners, it has been suggested that the *sound* of punk reflects whiteness. Writing on American punk pioneers the New York Dolls, Robert Christgau makes a link between the style of their drummer and the colour of their skin: “although drawn to the backbeat, he [Jerry Nolan] submerged it, never funk[ing] around.... This was essential discipline in what was supposed to be a definitively white style.”<sup>48</sup> Dave Laing, in his analysis of punk, quotes Christgau in his assessment of punk’s attitude to rhythm, also drawing on the stereotypes of race and rhythm:

More crucial to punk’s sense of difference from other musics is its attitude to rhythm. It is here that the apparent paradox of a music both more ‘primitive’ and ‘revisionist’ finds its most appropriate application. Perhaps the most characteristic rhythmic feature of music containing Afro-American elements is syncopation.... The presence of recognizable syncopation in the music is a precondition for all dancing in the rock-based popular music sphere. The main reason for the ‘undanceability’ of much punk rock (and for its adoption of the ‘pogo’ as a suitable dance form) is that, to quote Christgau, it tends to ‘submerge’ syncopation in its rhythmic patterns.<sup>49</sup>

Laing also points to the “monadic” style of punk rhythm (1-1-1-1), as opposed to the dyad of conventional rock (1-2-1-2), emphasising particularly the monadic style of punk bass lines. Simon Reynolds makes a similar point: “Pursuing a militant and

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<sup>46</sup> Simon Frith and John Street, ‘Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music’ in Reebee Garofalo (ed.), *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass music and mass movements*. Boston: South End Press, 1992, p.69.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Sabin, “‘I won’t let that Dago by’”, p.204.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Christgau, ‘New York Dolls’, in Greil Marcus (ed.), *Stranded: Rock and Roll for a Desert Island* [1979], Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007, p.139.

<sup>49</sup> Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985, p.61.

aggressively monolithic sound, punk had mostly purged ‘blackness’ from rock, severing the music’s links to R&B while simultaneously rejecting disco as escapist and vapid.”<sup>50</sup> These assertions all draw on a similar set of assumptions. Rhythmic variations, particularly syncopation, are proclaimed to be entirely “black” in nature. In addition, the references to “discipline” (Christgau) and the use of adjectives such as “militant” (Reynolds) as opposite to rhythmic variation implies these characteristics as white; it follows that characteristics of wildness, primitivism, and indiscipline are ascribed to non-whites. Consider the David Lane quote (above); Lane sees white dancing traditions as “refined courtship,” disciplined and orderly. In contrast, black (or “Negroidal frenzy”) dancing is “simulated copulation.”

Punk’s value of discipline was also perceived in its generic “purity”:

Along with dance music’s sensuality and swing, punk had also rejected all those hyphenated compound sounds (jazz-rock, country-rock, folk-rock, classical-rock, etc.) that proliferated in the early seventies. To punks, this kind of thing smacked of virtuoso showing off.... Defining itself against this limp, ‘all gates open’ eclecticism, punk proposed a strident purism.<sup>51</sup>

Punk was valued for its lack of artifice, for its DIY, back-to-basics aesthetics, for its accessibility. It threatened the distinction between audience and performer, particularly with its philosophy of “learn three chords and start a band.” These values appealed to the sensibility of the extreme right; the lack of artifice portrayed a raw, unrefined sort of authenticity, an authenticity of the man in the street, stripped of the decadence of mainstream rock. These values were particularly significant to the punk subgenre Oi!.

Oi! is perhaps the genre with the most association with racism in Britain. It was not born out of racist ideology, however, but like the racialisation of genres it acquired it in a gradual process. In terms of genre style, it was based on simplicity, both musically—in harmony and melody—and in structure. Oi! is therefore the punk ethos of “purity” taken to the extreme, completely rejecting artifice. The emphasis on

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<sup>50</sup> Simon Reynolds, *Rip it Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005, xx.

<sup>51</sup> Reynolds, *Rip it Up*, xx.



purity in music was analogous to race; in extreme-right ideology, whiteness is seen as pure, while other races are threatening because of their capacity to “dilute” white purity.<sup>52</sup>

While Oi! was the most significant subgenre of punk for the extreme right, other genres associated with punk also proved popular, even if their “purity” is even less obvious. 2-tone was in many ways a riposte to the racial segregation of popular music: white musicians became very open to what was previously perceived as being black music, influenced by a number of genres and working with black musicians, seeking “to produce a fusion of white (punk) and black (reggae) British musical traditions by developing a contemporary version of 1960s Jamaican ska.”<sup>53</sup> However, the multiracial makeup of this genre didn’t put off a racist following. Just as the skinheads of the 1960s had modelled their style on black culture and listened to reggae while simultaneously engaging in racist practices such as “Paki bashing,” the skinhead fans of 2-tone bands saw no problem in their appreciation of this music, although they did take steps to “sanitise” the musicians to align them with their ideology. For instance, the skinhead fans of the Specials, who had two black members, referred to the band as “the Specials plus two,” making clear that in their eyes the Specials consisted of its white members.<sup>54</sup> The only all-white 2-tone band, Madness, had frequent problems at their gigs from racist skinheads,<sup>55</sup> while Madness frontman Suggs had been a roadie for (pre-racist) Skrewdriver,<sup>56</sup> giving the band something of a cult following on the extreme right. 2-tone was not to become a genre of great significance to the extreme right, but it demonstrates the way in which the

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<sup>52</sup> This fear is most often expressed in terms of female sexuality, and is discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>53</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*, London: Comedia, 1988, p.214.

<sup>54</sup> Cecelia Grizzard, *White Riot: The Political Ambiguities of Racism in Early British Punk Music, 1976-1981*. MA Dissertation submitted to Oxford Brookes University, 2004, pp.84-5.

<sup>55</sup> Grizzard, *White Riot*, p.43.

<sup>56</sup> Joe Pearce, *Skrewdriver—The First Ten Years—The Way It’s Got To Be!* London: Skrewdriver Services, 1987, Chapter 2.

apparent cognitive dissonance of racists listening and dancing to multiracial bands or musics is not necessarily considered to be dissonant at all.

Oi! did not last as the dominant genre of extreme-right music, with more general rock and metal styles becoming prominent, but many aspects of Oi! ideology were maintained. Vocal delivery is more mixed, but still has a notable trace of Oi!'s influence; while there are some bands and singers who sing in a conventional manner, there are many others who deliver their lyrics predominantly through shouting. Instrumental ability is still varied, but this often seems to be the result of capability rather than aesthetic; there are many extreme-right bands—particularly playing metal, but also some more general rock bands—which make no attempt to conceal their virtuosity. The very letters of Oi! also became something of a trademark of band names, which were misspelled to include them, particularly in Germany to replace “eu,” as with the bands Proissenheads, Doitsche Patrioten, Noie Werte and Oithansie. Above all, extreme-right rock music continues to present itself as the authentic expression of white working-class culture.

## **Rock**

While punk and Oi! were the catalysts for the creation of an extreme-right music culture, these genres became less significant throughout the 1980s, with most bands employing a more generic rock sound. While punk ideals were still influential, they were no longer essential. For example, some bands still maintained a certain incompetence in their instrumental skills, but others demonstrated their proficiency. This was evident particularly in the growing influence and use of metal, particularly in central and eastern Europe.

Using the umbrella term “rock,” while vague, can be problematic. While rock's origins—from rock 'n' roll—are usually cited as a mix of African-American blues and predominantly white country music, the influence of black music, and particularly of black rock 'n' roll pioneers, is emphasised. Either way is problematic from an extreme-right perspective; if seen as a product of black culture or as the

result of cultural miscegenation, then it is hardly an example of white supremacy. Therefore, extreme-right advocates of rock emphasise its white roots or point to its development by white musicians. The former approach is shown by some of the respondents to the Stormfront forum post quoted above on the white origins of music—they emphasise the role of Hank Williams in the birth of rock 'n' roll, particularly his 1947 song 'Move It On Over.'<sup>57</sup>

The role of white performers is also crucial to the account in an anonymous editorial of a South Carolina skinhead fanzine *Skinned Alive* in 1987. The editorial begins by challenging the attitude displayed by ideologues such as those found in the pages of *Spearhead*:

This claim [the African origins of popular music] is also used by boring old Losers among Whites who are responsible for letting "Jews" and Third Worlders take over in the first place. These old farts claim rock music hurts their ears or they say it is just "nigger music." Well, we say, the music of warriors ought to hurt your ears: The sounds of the march into battle were not meant to evoke the charms of a swank drawing room in Mayfair or Beverly Hills. We're in a rage: You're damn right we've gone Berserk—just like our Viking ancestors. Unlike our critics, we simply can't sit still and watch apes steal our women, rape our old women, take our jobs and turn our nations into the same black pits of filth and ugliness as the lands the minorities are descended from. The music which reflects our rage and which empowers us to unite and repel the alien invasion is rough, rocky, gut-wrenching and we make no apologies to anyone for it.<sup>58</sup>

This narrative not only places skinheads in the same historical continuum as Vikings (see Chapter Six), but also argues that their music is an aural manifestation of an aspect of whiteness, in this case white rage.

This revisionism dismisses black influences by crediting the particular genius of whites for the evolution of rock. As well as white musicians, it cites the technological basis of rock 'n' roll:

The roots of rock and roll are electrical. Without electricity and the electrical guitar there would be no rock and roll. And as White Power Rock Music

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<sup>57</sup> 'White People Invented the Blues, Jazz, Rock and Roll and Rap', *Stormfront*.

<sup>58</sup> Anonymous, 'Rock 'n' Roll: White or Black?' [1987], reprinted in Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay (eds.), *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*, London: Verso, 2011, p. 143.

pioneers [sic] Ian Stuart told us in a recent interview, “Who invented the electric guitar? It wasn’t a nigger.”<sup>59</sup>

As well as the technological basis of rock, the influence of white practitioners is emphasised, particularly Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley:

The two undisputed, towering geniuses of that sound [White rock] are JERRY LEE LEWIS (the Killer) and the King himself, ELVIS PRESLEY. No other White artists, to say nothing of some black, can hold a candle to these two.... PRESLEY and LEWIS got their sound, their genius and their power from the heritage of Scottish and Anglo-Saxon folk and church music traditions out of which they were sprung.... White folk musical genius is too overwhelming to be resisted and that is the root of the appeal of modern Rock.... [Presley and Lewis] would shake the world to its core with their unique White sound.... Our music is overwhelmingly White in origin, style and evolution. 50s Rock was White. Rockabilly was White. Punk’s a White invention. Heavy-metal is White. The original Stones and Who sounds were White.<sup>60</sup>

This quote’s attempt to associate “white” genres with the supposed genius of individual practitioners is mirrored in a passage from a biography of Donaldson: “In the 1950’s [sic] the DJ Alan Freed coined the phrase Rock and Roll. In the 1980’s Ian Stuart pioneered the term White Rock.”<sup>61</sup> As well as giving Alan Freed the main credit for rock ‘n’ roll, implying the efforts of early black musicians only had significance due to the ingenuity of Freed, this quote attempts to establish “White Rock” as distinct, as a new phenomenon, and therefore sidesteps the issue of multicultural origins of white supremacist music.

## **Metal**

One of the most significant subgenres of rock within extreme-right music is metal, which, as perhaps the dominant genre of the 1980s—the time when the extreme-right music scene was developing—was always likely to affect extreme-right bands. Metal has influenced the music produced by many bands, with biographies of Skrewdriver

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.143.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp.143-5.

<sup>61</sup> *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004, Chapter IV, available at <http://www.skrewdriver.org/diamond.html>.

asserting that the band progressed from Oi! to metal,<sup>62</sup> even if it might be more accurate to say that they incorporated metal influences into their rock aesthetic. In addition, an extreme-right metal subgenre, National Socialist Black Metal, has emerged, while ostensibly non-political metal, particularly “black” and “pagan” metal, has come to be viewed as a “white” genre, with mainstream bands perceived as embodying extreme-right ideals.

The extreme-right belief in the “whiteness” of metal is perfectly consistent with the typical characterisations of the genre’s mainstream identity. Robert Walser notes that while heavy metal can trace its origins to African-American blues, “the histories of musical genres such as rock and heavy metal commonly begin at the point of white dominance,” thus emphasising the contribution of, for example, Black Sabbath at the expense of precursors such as Robert Johnson and Howlin’ Wolf.<sup>63</sup> From this perspective, metal has been highly effective in “whitewashing” the diversity of its roots, while effectively providing a homogeneous racial space, with the genre remaining essentially white-dominated. Walser argues that white appropriation of black forms and styles, and the purging of these influences from the genre’s self-identity, is probably one reason why the genre has failed to attract black fans and musicians in any large numbers. It is interesting that part of Walser’s discussion is centred on the body, as he argues that metal’s “relatively rigid sense of the body and concern with dominance reflect European-American transformation of African-American musical materials and cultural values.”<sup>64</sup>

While mainstream metal can be interpreted as being compatible with extreme-right ideology, there are sub-genres which lend themselves even more strongly. Keith Kahn-Harris’s book on “extreme” metal analyses many of these sub-

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<sup>62</sup> Joe Pearce, *Skrewdriver—The First Ten Years—The Way It’s Got To Be!*, London: Skrewdriver Services, 1987, Chapter Six; *Diamond In The Dust*, Chapter IV.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993, pp.8-9.

<sup>64</sup> Walser, *Running with the Devil*, p.17.

genres, including thrash, death, doom, and black metals, as well as grindcore.<sup>65</sup>

Kahn-Harris notes that, similar to mainstream metal, extreme forms also purge black elements:

The extent to which extreme metal has excluded the African American musical influences of metal is striking. Not only is there virtually no detectable blues element in the music, there is a near-total absence of syncopation and other rhythms common in forms of funk, soul and other African American influenced dance music.<sup>66</sup>

So even though metal in general is strongly associated with whiteness and the forgetting of black musical influences, there are sub-genres such as extreme metal which take this “whitening” even further. The tendency for rhythmic uniformity in metal, despite the fact that metal drummers are capable of and often play exceedingly complex and unusual parts, is reminiscent of Christgau’s assertion that punk similarly “submerged” rhythmic syncopation to create a “white” sound.

Many of the themes of extreme metal sub-genres are similar to those adopted by factions of the extreme right, particularly an interest in Vikings and paganism, but it is extreme metal’s ambiguous relationship with racism, anti-Semitism and fascism that is most striking. Kahn-Harris cites the case of Darkthrone’s *Transilvanian Hunger* (Peaceville Records, 1994) which was originally going to include a reference criticising “Jewish behaviour” before media pressure intervened; however, the album was still released with the phrase “Norsk Arisk Black Metal” (Norwegian Aryan Black Metal) on the sleeve.<sup>67</sup>

It is conceivable that examples such as this are merely part of black metal’s rejection of mainstream culture, rather than a declaration of political affiliation just as black metal bands are also known to refer to rape and murder. Indeed, Kahn-Harris argues that any *explicit* political stance would be undesirable to many musicians and fans, as the scene “upholds an ‘autonomous’ view of music, which sees it as ideally removed from social forces.... For extreme metal scene members,

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<sup>65</sup> Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, Oxford: Berg, 2007, pp.2-5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.33.

<sup>67</sup> Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal*, pp.152-153.

music connotes the scene and politics connotes that which is outside the scene.”<sup>68</sup> Just as with punk’s use of the swastika, then, the flirtation of some metal bands with the language and symbolism of racism and fascism can be understood as a transgressive act.

However, just as punk’s use of the swastika could be perceived as supporting extreme-right politics, so bands such as Darkthrone are liked by extreme-right metal fans, with that band particularly popular.<sup>69</sup> What this also means—despite Kahn-Harris’s claim that “overt Nazi bands tend to be confined to their own, largely autonomous scenes”<sup>70</sup>—is that messages aligned with extreme-right ideology can circulate in this genre relatively unproblematically. Even explicitly racist bands are not necessarily ostracised. The following is a quote from an extreme-right fan of black metal, which refers to Burzum, the one-man band of Varg Vikernes, a neo-Nazi imprisoned for the murder of a black metal guitarist and arson of churches. It is unlikely that such a notorious figure’s politics would be unknown to listeners:

I’ve got friends with varying musical tastes and stances on race issues. But all of my fellow Metal heads (wether [sic] they agree with his or my racial stances or not) love Burzum every bit as much as Dark Funeral, Bathory, Venom, Mayhem, Impaled Nazarene, and Enslaved, despite Vaarg’s [sic] highly publicised stance on race issues.<sup>71</sup>

In truth, given that the lyrics of black metal are almost indistinguishable because of the genre’s singing stylistic conventions, and given that even examples of racism are heavily outweighed by anti-Christianity, it is unreasonable to connect the majority of black metal groups explicitly to the extreme-right music scene. There are, however, bands which assert this affiliation themselves.

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<sup>68</sup> Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal*, p.154.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. ‘Black Metal, *Vanguard News Network Forum*, created 2 Feb 2005, <http://vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=14907>; ‘Black Metal’ *Stormfront*, created 2 Jun 2006, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t299330/>; ‘darkthrone and other norwegian black metal’, *Tightrope Forum* created 21 Feb 2012, <http://www.tightropeforum.com/showthread.php?5282-darkthrone-and-other-norwegian-black-metal&highlight=darkthrone>; all accessed 13 Aug 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal*, p.155.

<sup>71</sup> ‘An Overview of White Supremacy in Punk and Metal’, *Tightrope Forum*, created 31 Aug 2012, <http://www.tightropeforum.com/showthread.php?6009-An-Overview-of-White-Supremacy-in-Punk-and-Metal>, accessed 9 Aug 2013.

National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) is a label for black metal bands with National Socialist influence; while it can be used to refer to transgressive appropriation, it more often implies political conviction behind National Socialist influence. Band names—such as Greece’s Der Stürmer, named after a Nazi newspaper, and the French band Kristallnacht—reflect the influence of extreme-right politics in general and National Socialism in particular;. The ideology draws on social Darwinism, with one introductory website stating: “We support natural selection, and ethnic nationalism, which means that each state supports an organic population defined by language, culture, values and genetics.”<sup>72</sup>

According to this website, NSBM is a “distributed movement” with no leadership, although groups such as the Pagan Front (<http://www.thepaganfront.com/>) do act as umbrella organisations for the genre. Unlike the rest of the extreme-right music scene, NSBM “does not try to evangelize; instead they wait for new adherents to burrow their way into the scene.”<sup>73</sup> This may in part be because of NSBM’s elitist intellectualism, with Vikernes writing that “We seek the elite.”<sup>74</sup> This elitism can be off-putting to outsiders, as the following quotes from *Stormfront* indicate: “I can’t stand the wankers in the scene that take it way too seriously for my liking,”<sup>75</sup> and “I think the majority of metal musicians portray an elitist attitude.”<sup>76</sup> In addition, NSBM’s image is somewhat at odds with most other extreme-right styles. A *Resistance* article on whether black metal is white music cites an argument that

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<sup>72</sup> ‘F.A.Q.’, *National Socialist Black Metal*, n.d., <http://www.nsbm.org/faq/>, accessed 5 Aug 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Justin Massa, ‘Unholy Alliance: The National Socialist Black Metal Underground’, in Devin Burghart (ed.), *Soundtracks to the White Revolution: White Supremacist Assaults on Youth Music Subcultures*, Chicago: Center for New Community, 1999, p.51.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003, p.307.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Anyone feel the same about Black Metal “fans”?’ , *Stormfront*, created 28 Sep 2008, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t526782/>, accessed 5 Aug 2013.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Anyone feel the same about Black Metal “fans”?’ , *Stormfront*, created 28 Sep 2008, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t526782-5/>, accessed 5 Aug 2013.



many Death/Black Bands cannot be treated as WP [White Power] Bands, because who would take seriously such “faggots” with long hair and make-up? This is no surprise at all, given the ridiculous show put on by self-declared Black Metal bands such as Britain’s *Cradle of Filth*, one of the most popular Metal bands these days. One can hardly find anything white about them except their make-up.<sup>77</sup>

The article emphasises this distinction between what the writer sees as the inauthentic mainstream in contrast to the “militant underground” which is working for the extreme-right cause, but it is clear that black metal has not been fully accepted by some in the extreme-right movement. Even so, it achieved significant popularity in the early 2000s, with Resistance Records owner William Pierce investing in the black metal label Cymophane Records c.2000.<sup>78</sup> While this is unsurprising given metal’s potential profitability and appeal to young listeners, it should be remembered that metal as a genre strove to create a self-identity as white, and in doing so embodies certain aspects of extreme-right ideology.

## **Folk**

Folk music is a genre of contradiction. It is often defined as a “tradition evolved through the process of oral transmission,”<sup>79</sup> but much folk music has only survived because of the activities of folk collectors, who notated and recorded folk music according to their own tastes and preferences. It has been appropriated by Fascist and Communist governments to legitimise their regimes, and Harker argues that the concept of folksong has helped “to mystify workers’ culture in the interests of bourgeois ideology and therefore of capitalism, east and west.”<sup>80</sup> Folk has been commonly associated with left-wing ideology since the second folk revival, in line with the beliefs of prominent collectors and artists, but the sense of longing for a

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Is Black Metal a White Noise? A Brief History of the Movement’, *Resistance*, Iss.11 Spring 2000, p.48.

<sup>78</sup> Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, p.317.

<sup>79</sup> Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of “Folk Music” and “Art Music”: Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.2.

<sup>80</sup> Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The manufacture of British ‘folksong,’ 1700 to the present day*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985, xii.

romanticised pre-industrial golden age which drove many folk collectors demonstrates the reactionary potential of the genre. Folk's position as a "national" music—even if folk nationalism has been used for projects on left and right—means it can be just as easily used as a tool for bigotry, xenophobia and cultural exclusivism as for an idealised expression of a utopian community.

In a genre of such contradiction, it is unsurprising that the extreme right have seen folk music as in line with their ideology. Indeed, the concept of the "Volk"—representing the national character to which a nation's people belong—was a crucial component of Nazi ideology. Although folk has always been advocated to a degree by some on the extreme right, it came into particular favour with the two collaborations of Ian Stuart Donaldson with Stigger (a pseudonym short for "stupid nigger" used by the guitarist Steve Calladine), *Patriotic Ballads* (Rock-O-Rama, 1991) and *Patriotic Ballads II – Our Time Will Come* (Rock-O-Rama, 1992). On these albums, folk is understood aesthetically, the songs being originals, reworked versions of Skrewdriver songs and a couple of covers of Lynyrd Skynyrd and Guns N' Roses songs. "Folk music" is evoked merely through the use of acoustic guitars, with typical themes—particularly vehement anti-Communism—appearing. While this suggests business as usual, the sleeve notes of the first album suggest that Donaldson is playing the role of a balladeer highlighting injustice:

Everyday in the media we are bombarded with stories of injustice against minorities. What we never hear about are the many cases of oppression and discrimination by the state against us, the white majority. Ian Stuart and Stigger of SKREWDRIVER have therefore put together some acoustic ballads to highlight this injustice, and to offer some hope to a much maligned people. Listen and learn.<sup>81</sup>

These albums are often cited in internal histories of the extreme right as hugely influential, introducing a generation of listeners to folk. It is also claimed that these albums appealed to a new set of listeners, as in a *Spearhead* obituary of Donaldson,

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted in *Diamond in the Dust*, VII.

in which the writer claims that my “own father, on hearing some of his songs, believed he was listening to folk music.”<sup>82</sup>

At around the same time, the German singer Frank Rennieke was establishing himself as a “Nationale Bard,” gaining inter-generational popularity among traditionalists and neo-Nazis alike.<sup>83</sup> Like Donaldson, Rennieke sings mainly originals, focusing particularly on (at times vague) themes such as “blood and soil,” Germany, resistance, racism and martyrdom.<sup>84</sup> Such is the cult of Donaldson in Britain that in an interview with *Blood & Honour* it is assumed that Rennieke was inspired by Donaldson, which Rennieke denies.<sup>85</sup> In fact, Rennieke’s ballad releases—themselves drawing on a long German folk tradition—have proved so popular that it has become a fairly established style on the German extreme right, with musicians such as Annett Moeck releasing music in a similar vein.

One concerted attempt to embrace folk as understood in terms of a song tradition was undertaken by the BNP. The BNP has engaged with folk music in a number of ways. Firstly, and probably most publicly, it has attempted to identify with mainstream folk artists. Nick Griffin has made no secret of his preference for folk, and sees artists such as Kate Rusby as “a welcome contrast to the multi-cult junk played incessantly on Radio One.”<sup>86</sup> In making this distinction, Griffin is making clear that folk as he understands it necessarily entails racial, or at least cultural, purity. While this assertion has been contested—particularly by Folk Against Fascism—folk music was perhaps the pre-eminent style promoted by the modernised BNP, suggesting a market that agrees with Griffin’s interpretation of the genre.

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<sup>82</sup> ‘Ian Stuart Obituary’, *Spearhead*, No.299 January 1994, p.14.

<sup>83</sup> Margritta Fahr, ‘Frank Rennieke - Der “Nationale Barde”’, *PopScriptum 04*, 1995, available at [http://www2.hu-berlin.de/fpm/popscrip/themen/pst04/pst04\\_fahr02.htm](http://www2.hu-berlin.de/fpm/popscrip/themen/pst04/pst04_fahr02.htm), accessed 31 Oct 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.; Netz-Gegen-Nazis, ‘Frank Rennieke’, 7 Apr 2009, <http://www.netz-gegen-nazis.de/artikel/rennicke-frank>, accessed 31 Oct 2012.

<sup>85</sup> ‘For folk family and fatherland. German patriotic singer, Frank Rennieke speaks to Blood & Honour...’, *Blood & Honour* (UK), issue 12 n.d., p.6.

<sup>86</sup> Nick Griffin, ‘American Journey.’ *Chairman’s Column*, 6 Nov 2007, <http://chairmans-column.blogspot.com>, accessed 6 Jun 2011.

The BNP also actively encourages members to become involved with local events that can be grouped under the folk banner, with an activist handbook outlining this idea:

Ideally our activists will lead their communities in organising, or at least supporting cultural events such as St George's Day celebrations (April 23rd). Most regions of the country have cultural events which are unique to that area, or country. For example, the Padstow Hobby Horse in Cornwall, Arbor Tree Day in Shropshire, Garland King Day and The Well Dressing in Derbyshire, the Marshfield Mummers in Wiltshire, the Haxey Hood in Humberside and countless others. Some such celebrations, now very popular, have only been revived in recent years – the Hastings Jack in the Green and Whittlesey Straw Bear festivals show just how big such things can get. Why not do some research to see if there's a lost local tradition that you can inspire a team of enthusiasts to revive? Our ancient national festivals, such as May Day, Guy Fawkes Night and Christmas, should also be staunchly supported – lest the PC lunatic health and safety police and the Islamists manage to ban them all.<sup>87</sup>

In laying claim to the cultural events and attempting to re-establish them, the BNP is seeking to take on the role of gatekeeper. The call to act before Islamist intervention also suggests that there are criteria which can lead to exclusion from the folk, in this case religion, but a religion which the extreme right predominantly conceives of in ethnic terms. Similarly, Nick Griffin challenged singer Billy Bragg, well known for his left-wing associations, to sing a "proper folk song, like the Blackleg Miner," thereby questioning the legitimacy of Bragg's folk associations.<sup>88</sup> Through these tactics, the BNP has attempted to establish itself as the authentic voice of British folk culture and, indeed, as the "folk" itself.

This attempt by the BNP to associate its ideology with folk culture, and its practice of selling the work of folk artists without permission to raise funds, inspired the creation of Folk Against Fascism, an organisation which worked against the BNP. Folk Against Facsism's success in mobilising mainstream folk culture against the BNP may have hindered the latter's attempts to appropriate the genre, but it has not ended the popularity of folk within the extreme right. The BNP's albums of adapted traditional tunes and newly-composed "folk" material are not unique, with many

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<sup>87</sup> BNP, *Activists' & Organisers' Handbook*. n.p.: 2010(?), p.27.

<sup>88</sup> 'About Folk Against Fascism', *Folk Against Fascism*, n.d., <http://www.folkagainstfascism.com/about.html>, accessed 6 Jun 2012.

others having covered ideologically suitable folk songs and written their own music in a similar style; folk artists and traditions are popular topics on forums, while various outlets sell folk releases alongside Oi! bands.

This continuing popularity is unsurprising, particularly since folk is generally regarded as a medium through which resistance is well expressed. Just as musicians might use native music as a symbol of opposition to colonial or Western dominance, folk is employed as a rejection of the mainstream music which is seen as promoting multiculturalism or degenerate values. Added to this, folk's reputation for articulating "communal values [and commenting] on shared social problems"<sup>89</sup> chimes well with the extreme right's political motivations.

While folk has proved relatively popular in these instances, there has been little attempt to theorise it to any extent. It is presumed by extreme-right proponents that folk is representative of a nation, and as the extreme-right conception of nation is bound up with race, that folk represents whiteness. In addition, there is little argument over folk authenticity, with original compositions labelled as folk apparently because they sound like it. Folk music, understood as traditional music, is appreciated by some on the extreme right, with various dedicated forums on Stormfront.<sup>90</sup> This often ignores intriguing ambiguities, such as the influence of Jewish and Romany peoples—two traditional enemies of the extreme right—on various folk musics of the world, particularly in Eastern Europe. The "multicultural" nature of this music and its associated traditions are seemingly unknown to those who advocate it, and who apparently see it as a pure expression of nationhood. This serves as yet another example of how extreme-right portrayals of musics as racially pure must involve the reduction of complex processes and ideologies into simple binaries.

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<sup>89</sup> Simon Frith, "'The magic that can set you free': the ideology of folk and the myth of the rock community", *Popular Music*, Vol.1, 1981, p.159.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. 'European folk dancing!', created 22 Nov 2009, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t659724/>; 'European Traditional/Folk Music (no classical)', created 24 Feb 2012, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t868574/>; as well as various country-specific threads in the 'Cultures and Customs' subcategory, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/f34/>; all accessed 31 Nov 2012

## Country

Folk collectors such as Cecil Sharp did tour the United States, but they were seeking music from groups that could trace their origins elsewhere, such as seeking “English” folk music in the Appalachian mountains. With the shorter history of the United States and its “melting-pot” history, it is difficult to proclaim one overarching authentic folk culture. However, country music has taken on some of the characteristics projected on to folk in other countries; it is seen as a music of authenticity, a music with working-class values, and a music with a distinctive history. As with folk, the extreme right have latched on to one significant feature of country music, namely its characterisation as a white genre.

In this regard, country is often portrayed as the contrast to rock music, stemming back to the record company distinction between hillbilly music and race music. Hillbilly music was characterised as the music of poor southern whites, despite the diversity of country’s origins:

[C]ountry music derives from a diversity of European, African, Mexican, and First Nation musical sources. Nevertheless, country music is known as the outgrowth of the vernacular music of white Americans, just as rock music is considered to be the developed form of decades of vernacular music-making by black Americans.<sup>91</sup>

This “whitening” of country has somewhat tarnished its image, with it being associated with a history of a particular sort of segregationist politics: “the specific white supremacist, antimodern, and antiurban politics and culture of the Confederacy.”<sup>92</sup> In this conception, country is “understood to signify an explicit claim to *whiteness* ... a marked, foregrounded claim of cultural identity—a bad whiteness.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Maclachlan, ‘The Greatest Rock Star Who Never Was’, pp.208-9.

<sup>92</sup> Aaron A. Fox, *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004, p.25.

<sup>93</sup> Aaron A. Fox, ‘White Trash Alchemies of the Abject Sublime: Country as “Bad” Music’, in Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno (eds.), *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, New York & London: Routledge, 2004, p.44.

It is not my intention here to argue whether or not this reputation is deserved, but this perception of country makes it a genre ripe for appropriation by the extreme right, even outwith the United States. In the early 1980s, for example, the traditionalist faction within the NF was, in contrast to the youth faction's embrace of Oi!, largely dismissive of popular music. The only genre deemed to be ideologically suitable was country music, which

was acceptable because it was said (inaccurately) to derive from "the rich heritage of the White peoples" and to originate in British folk songs of the Elizabethan era. Only in country music could they find, the racists said, the values and the community which accorded with their politics. The music was seen, again mistakenly, to embody their racist populism.<sup>94</sup>

Such an interpretation was predicated on the mistaken belief in a musical racial divide, and the equally mistaken belief in the isolation of "folk"-like musics from the mainstream popular culture of the time.<sup>95</sup> Although country music derived from a mixture of European, African and American (including Mexican) sources, it came to be seen as "white" in contrast to "black" rock music, a relationship that became so embedded that, according to Peter Doggett, "Suspicion, bordering on hatred, has shadowed every encounter between country and rock since the 1950s."<sup>96</sup>

Country music is very much perceived as a place of conservative values, and thus in opposition to various other musical subcultures, making it possible for listening to country music to be an explicit statement of political belief and not just an aesthetic choice.<sup>97</sup> Aaron Fox argues that the right-wing sentiments of songs such as Haggard's 'Okie from Muskogee' are not necessarily sincere or unironic,<sup>98</sup> but any subversive intent on the part of the musicians would arguably be irrelevant. Often, extreme-right adoption of songs and bands whitewashes any ambiguities in

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<sup>94</sup> Street, *Rebel Rock*, p.53.

<sup>95</sup> For an account of the "segregation" of these musics on racial lines, see Miller, *Segregating Sound*.

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in Heather Maclachan, 'The Greatest Rock Star Who Never Was: Garth Brooks, Chris Gaines, and Modern America', *American Music*, Vol.26 No.2 Summer 2008, p.209.

<sup>97</sup> Rosenthal and Flacks, *Playing For Change*, p.55.

<sup>98</sup> Aaron A. Fox, 'White Trash Alchemies of the Abject Sublime', p.51.

order to make the material conform to the narrow ideology of the extreme right. Thus, Skrewdriver's cover<sup>99</sup> of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' (*Hail the New Dawn*, Rock-O-Rama, 1984) from the musical *Cabaret* turns a song indicating the horrific potential of Nazism into a straightforward anthem of white nationalism, and the adoption of Lynyrd Skynyrd portrays the American South in terms of racist confederacy, neglecting the band's associations with black culture and its problems with the connotations of the confederate flag.<sup>100</sup> As such, material which is ambiguous will generally be interpreted in a way favourable to and harmonious with extreme-right ideology.

Country music, therefore, has been interpreted as a straightforward representation of extreme-right values and ideology, despite its historical association with black music and arguably ambiguous politics. The genre's conservative nature was recognised long ago; Malone quotes the folk collector Alan Lomax's writings of 1959, and his argument that:

the southern white rural style is the product of the "security patterns" of the white community. In reference to its social function, "the primary effect of music is to give the listener a feeling of security, for it symbolizes the place where he was born, his earliest childhood satisfactions, his religious experience, his pleasure in community doings, his courtship and his work—any or all of these personality-shaping experiences." A musical style, then, is 'one of the most conservative of culture traits,' because it is so deeply interwoven in the security framework of the community.<sup>101</sup>

As such, almost all white country musicians are generally well-liked by extreme-right country fans. Some artists and songs—particularly David Allen Coe, although he is occasionally confused with Johnny Rebel—are particularly popular because they are perceived to be in line with extreme-right ideology.

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<sup>99</sup> Skrewdriver's version turned the song into something of an extreme-right anthem, and it was re-recorded by Ian Stuart Donaldson with Stigger (*Patriotic Ballads*, Rock-O-Rama Records, 1991) and also by Saga (*My Tribute to Skrewdriver Volume 1*, Midgård Records, 2000).

<sup>100</sup> Alexander Abad-Santos, 'Racists Ruined the Confederate Flag for Lynyrd Skynyrd', *The Atlantic Wire*, 21 Sep 2012, <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/entertainment/2012/09/racists-ruined-confederate-flag-lynnyrd-skynyrd/57122/>, accessed 3 Oct 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.*, pp.11-12.



Even musicians who seem explicitly opposed to extreme-right ideology still have fans and defenders. For example, the all-female group Dixie Chicks caused controversy with their public stance against then-president of the USA George Bush and the invasion of Iraq, and to some conservative country fans through posing nude on a magazine cover. This led to a hostile reaction on some Stormfront forums:

I personally think they are acting like sluts and should have their Texas citizenship revoked! They in no way represent good ole [sic] Texan values whatsoever.<sup>102</sup>

Upon seeing the Dixie Chick's latest videos, I have all but concluded that the two sisters are Jews.<sup>103</sup>

The Dixie Pricks can go to hell with all the other liberal babykillers as far as I am concerned.<sup>104</sup>

It would be nice if they would die in a firey [sic] bus crash.<sup>105</sup>

However, even if the balance of opinion on Stormfront is against the band, there are still those who defend them, particularly for their resistance:

I like their music even though I don't agree with their views... To their respect they do not put political ideas in their songs (at least as far as I have heard).<sup>106</sup>  
Personally I respect them for voicing their own opinion in the face of the Jew-backed media...<sup>107</sup>

Despite the Dixie Chicks' espousal of liberal values and refusal to conform to the gender roles that some on the extreme right demand, they are still acceptable to others. Given that such leniency is unlikely to be granted to musicians of other genres, it seems that this is in no small part thanks to the cultural values and ideology the Dixie Chicks are ascribed through their mere association with country music.

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<sup>102</sup> 'Dixie Chicks', *Stormfront*, created 24 Apr 2003, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t66231/>, accessed 5 Jun 2013.

<sup>103</sup> 'Dixie Chicks Jews?' *Stormfront*, created 18 Oct 2002, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t40138/>, accessed 5 Jul 2013.

<sup>104</sup> 'Dixie Chicks Red State Low Attendance', *Stormfront*, created 9 Jun 2006, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t300976/>, accessed 5 Jun 2013.

<sup>105</sup> 'Dixie Chicks', *Stormfront*, created 24 Jun 2007, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t398563/>, accessed 9 Jun 2013.

<sup>106</sup> 'Dixie Chicks Red State Low Attendance', *Stormfront*, created 9 Jun 2006, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t300976/>, accessed 5 Jun 2013.

<sup>107</sup> 'Dixie Chicks', *Stormfront*, created 24 Jun 2007, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t398563/>, accessed 9 Jun 2013.

Probably the most prominent country musician explicitly associated with the extreme-right is Johnny Rebel, part of a wave of music released on Reb Rebel Records in the 1960s by musicians such as the Klansman, Odis Cochran and the Three Bigots, and Colonel Sharecropper.<sup>108</sup> This music was released in the context of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and was deliberately confrontational, with Rebel's songs 'Nigger Hatin' Me,' 'Move Them Niggers North' and 'Kajun Ku Klux Klan' representative of the material released. Such songs, as well as acting to dehumanise African-Americans, were intended to mobilise whites in support of maintaining segregation.<sup>109</sup> While Rebel achieved a modicum of popularity,<sup>110</sup> his career did not last beyond the 1960s, and it was not until he was rediscovered after the establishment of the extreme-right music scene that he was to become an important figure in the scene's self-identity.

One of the clearest influences Rebel has had is on the band Racist Redneck Rebels, whose album *Keep the Hate Alive!* (Micetrap Records, 2003) contains a number of song titles reminiscent of Rebel's, such as 'Niggers, Niggers, Niggers,' 'The Nigger Crematory' and 'Whatever Happened to That Dear Ol' Klan of Mine?' The approach of Racist Redneck Rebels is hugely dependent on their political incorrectness, not only through their use of culturally insensitive and inappropriate language, but also in their characterisation of race. One of their more popular songs, 'Droppin' the Kids off in Harlem,' concerns a father's attempt to cure his children of their appreciation of rap music:

Hey honey I'm dropping the kids off in Harlem;  
I'll pick 'em up when they've had enough of that nigger shit;  
Hey honey I'm dropping the kids off in Harlem;  
And we'll see how quick they come home when they've had enough of it;

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<sup>108</sup> Beth A. Messner, Art Jipson, Paul J. Becker and Bryan Byers, 'The Hardest Hate: A Sociological Analysis of Country Hate Music', *Popular Music and Society*, Vol.30 Iss.4 (2007), p.516.

<sup>109</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this music, see Messner et al., 'The Hardest Hate', pp.516-525.

<sup>110</sup> It is said his music was popular on jukeboxes but not played by radio stations, while Reb Rebel Records' biggest hits supposedly sold over 200,000 copies. Nick Pittman, 'Johnny Rebel Speaks', *Gambit*, 10 Jun 2003, <http://www.bestofneworleans.com/gambit/johnny-rebel-speaks/Content?oid=1241588>, accessed 5 Aug 2013. See also Michael Wade, 'Johnny Rebel and the Cajun Roots of Right-Wing Rock', *Popular Music and Society*, Vol.30 Iss.4 2007, p.501.

Well the kids came home right quick talking about going to college;  
Wanna be doctors and lawyers, anything but that Harlem stuff;  
Started doing homework and listening to country music;  
And in the garbage went all that Tommy Hilfiger crap;  
Don't those niggers know Tommy Hilfiger's a faggot?

While this song's appeal is based on its provocative nature, it is interesting to note that one of the ways the children attempt to avoid black culture, alongside education, is through country music, a pairing somewhat surprising given that country music generally positions itself at the opposite end of the social hierarchy from higher learning institutions.

Other country musicians have tended to use a "softer" approach to lyrics and subject matter, avoiding racial stereotypes and racist language. The work of Carl Klang is based partly on Christian values and "patriotism," but mostly consists of attacks on federal government and the socialist nature of taxes (see particularly *Extremist*, self-released, 1999). Klang's music generally consists solely of these attacks, not outlining a positive position or alternative. While such an approach is not automatically an indication of extreme-right belief, Klang has ties to the movement; his CDs are sold by extreme-right outlets, and he has been approvingly referenced in, among other places, the BNP's *Identity*.<sup>111</sup>

The BNP has also been active in the promotion of Traven Tucker, a country singer who has released two albums on Raventone Records (*Traven Tucker & the Nameless Faith*, 2002; *'Til the Day I Die*, 2006) which were also distributed by the BNP's Great White Records. Tucker also appeared at the party's Red White & Blue Festivals of 2007 and 2008. Tucker's albums, which have an electrified country sound, mourn the deterioration of traditional southern life and values, as in 'My Hometown' (*'Til the Day I Die*, Raventone Records, 2006):

Yesterday the flag did wave, and we could stand proud;  
You could speak the truth and you could speak it out loud;  
Now I don't understand every word I hear, from a sea of foreign sounds;  
Today this place don't look much like my hometown.

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<sup>111</sup> 'Building a Nationalist Music Alternative', *Identity*, No.18 March 2002, p.8.

The tone of these songs is in keeping with the “new racism,” with implied arguments for segregation and cultural preservation of whites, while maintaining that such views are not based on prejudice and unfairly classed as hate, an argument made in ‘Ain’t No Shame (Bein’ a White Man)’ (*’Til the Day I Die*, Raventone Records, 2006):

Just for the record man, let’s get one thing straight;  
Ain’t got nothing against no one, you can’t call it hate;  
But speaking for my brother, and speaking for my kin;  
My heritage and way of life, and this mess we’re in;  
Don’t try and make me pay, for sins of a few;  
’Cause there ain’t no shame in being a white man through and through.

Tucker’s shamelessness in his whiteness is presented through its equation with the southern way of life and its values. The references to heritage and family, as well as to the sins of the few (a group which does not include the narrator), present southern life, and, by extension, whiteness as inherently decent.

Such examples of country musicians explicitly aligning themselves with the extreme-right cause are relatively few. But what is significant about country music is not that it is a particularly popular genre for musicians, but that it represents a set of values and a way of life which, through its association with the American South and that region’s racialised history, is taken to represent white culture. With this in mind, in an extreme-right context, country music constitutes an aural signifier of whiteness, a musical code which has race as an integral component of its aesthetic.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that the commonly conceived racialised nature of certain genres is the result of historical processes rather than objective historical fact or expressive of essential qualities of racial difference. The desire to understand these genres as raced suggests a desire for authenticity, but a desire that does not wish to acknowledge the complicated and ambiguous origins of musical styles:

We—particularly the Americans among us—seem to have been born with a desire to categorize all cultural products as either authentically black or authentically white. We remain confused by those that are authentically mixed, as if that were some kind of logical impossibility.... There are those we

recognize as masters of racial mixing—Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix, and Eminem being the most obvious—but instead of accepting them as integrated Americans and therefore heroic figures, Hendrix gets accused of Uncle Tomming and Elvis and Eminem of “appropriation.” Even scholars, who should know better, almost always consider “black music” a field of study entirely separate from the rest of American music.<sup>112</sup>

The desire to diversify the scope of cultural and scholarly attention beyond white subjects through publications such as the *Black Music Research Journal* has drawn attention to the way in which society has acted to demonstrate the unspoken nature of white privilege, but it has also served to reify the notion of essential racial difference, and the idea that such difference is expressed in music.

The notion that race is a characteristic of music is problematic given the multiracial origins of many genres, as well as the scientific dismantling of the very concept of race. This contradiction is demonstrated by the extreme right’s difficulty in firmly establishing genres as white. It is a commonplace assertion that music is raced, most notably with the rhetoric of “black” music. From an extreme-right perspective, in a world of raced music genres, some music must therefore be white; in this regard, the racing of genres by the extreme right is clearly an extreme manifestation of a mainstream commonplace. Furthermore, the ascription of racial characteristics based on music—such as the extreme-right interpretation of hip-hop as representing the criminality and degeneracy of black people—is mirrored by the mainstream tendency to describe black musicians and people as inherently rhythmic or soulful.

Nevertheless, when ideologues set out to establish the racial nature of genres, they must contend with contradictions, ambiguities and disagreements. Indeed, within the extreme-right movement there is disagreement as to whether “white” refers to appearance, bloodline or character. Given this non-specificity of whiteness, as well as the mixed cultural origins and histories of most music genres, any arguments over “white” genres have to rely on selective histories and simplification

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<sup>112</sup> Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*, London: Faber and Faber, 2007, p.98.

to conform to the binary nature that the extreme right seek. However, while diversifying genres has been problematic in terms of ideology, it is an understandable component of the extreme right's desire to maximise their economic potential and to satisfy the interests of as many potential supporters as possible. From this perspective, it is possible that the extreme right are less concerned with establishing what "whiteness" is, and rather hope to appeal to as broad a base of "whites" as possible in order to advance their goals.



## **Chapter Four:**

### **Populist Music: Genre, Lyrics and the Construction of Class**

*“White, White, White working class;  
Working class patriot;  
White, White, White working class;  
Working class way of life.”*

Arresting Officers, ‘Working Class Patriot’, *Land and Heritage*, Rock-O-Rama,  
1990.

*“The British National Party is the voice of ordinary people  
who fear for their future and those of their children under the  
present government and the ‘established’ political parties.”*

‘The Voice of Ordinary People’, BNP Scotland General Election Manifesto 2011,  
p.4.

*“Crooked politicians and their media lies;  
A race of dignity is what they despise;  
They're raping our nation that was proud and free;  
Now like vultures they are coming for me.”*

Bound For Glory, ‘America, America’, *Warriors Glory*, Rock-O-Rama, 1990.



The extreme right has an ambiguous relationship with social class. The extreme-right factions of the first half of the 20th century incorporated aspects of socialism into their ideology, but simultaneously demanded that loyalty to the nation take absolute priority, as opposed to communism's advocacy of loyalty on class lines (a distinction further muddled by Stalin's adoption of nationalist communism). The different manifestations of extreme-right ideology have also had to deal with a tension in advocating elite or popular culture. However, even with such contradictions, it is possible to discern certain tendencies—particularly over the last thirty or so years—in extreme-right narratives of class, as well as their expression in music.

The contemporary extreme right actively embraces genres and styles which are associated with working-class values. While genres such as folk carry respectability, the championing of styles such as Oi! and country involves the adoption of something which is deemed culturally base by the mainstream; therefore, the deliberate embracing of such genres implies a rejection of supposed elite culture. It is also worth pointing out that, a few negligible forays into pop music notwithstanding, populist music is not the same thing as mass or mainstream music, which is often perceived as decadent, degenerate and racially impure.

This chapter is not intended to ascribe or justify the class identities of particular genres of popular music; rather, it investigates how these associations are adopted, adapted and rejected in the music of the extreme right, particularly in the ideology surrounding this music. It should also be noted that mere association is not necessarily the sole component of populist music. Class belonging is emphasised through attacks on outsiders, with hostility particularly directed towards elite groups and the middle class.

While populist rhetoric and language have been cited in analyses of political manifestations of the extreme right, it is not a concept that has been explored with regard to music (although the association of extreme-right music with particular class-based values has been recognised to an extent). This is in spite of the significance that class narratives have to the understanding and justification of much

of the material of the extreme-right music scene, and furthermore to that material which it seeks to adopt. This chapter examines extreme-right music subcultures through the lens of populism, noting the various ways in which class is performed, particularly the almost ubiquitous presence of working-class values.

### **Populism and the Extreme Right**

At various times since the 1970s, and particularly after the electoral breakthrough of Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National in France in 1984, extreme-right parties in Western Europe have adopted a populist approach.<sup>1</sup> This tendency reflects the latest manifestation of extreme-right preoccupation, albeit varied, with class. Extreme-right narratives of class can generally be delineated into two varieties: a more traditional belief in an elite class (not necessarily corresponding with the perceived elite within a society) comparable to interpretations of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*; and a veneration of the perceived values and morals of the working class, generally contrasted with decadence and degeneracy elsewhere in society. These need not be mutually exclusive, particularly given that the elevation of the working class carries with it an implication of elitism—as do beliefs in racial superiority—but the ascendancy of populism reflects and demonstrates a shift of emphasis from elites towards masses.

Populism often takes the form of depicting a struggle between the common population and elites, and as such is used to attack the political classes as being out of touch. While it has strong connections with right-wing rhetoric, it is just as likely to be found on the far left, and even mainstream political parties use populist language when it suits their purpose. Indeed, John Lukacs argues that for a significant period, a general right-wing fear of popular sovereignty meant that populism was essentially a left-wing phenomenon, although no longer.<sup>2</sup> But while

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<sup>1</sup> Jens Rydgren, 'Is Extreme Right-wing Populism Contagious? Explaining the Emergence of a New Party Family', *European Journal of Political Research* Vol.44 No.3 2005, pp.413-437.

<sup>2</sup> John Lukacs, *Democracy and Populism: Fear & Hatred*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, p.18. This is not to say that populist uprisings and movements did not at times espouse right-wing ideology, but rather that the political parties of the right tended to distance themselves from populism.

populism as a style is therefore not confined to any one political persuasion, it is a core tool of huge significance to most contemporary extreme-right movements.

Political scientist Roger Eatwell considers four features to be central to populism:

First, populists claim to represent the true will of the people, which is failing to be heard.... Second, populists are anti-Establishment, portraying parties and especially elite politicians as distant and often corrupt.... [A] linked third trait [is] the tendency to use “low” rather than “high” concepts, language and style. Fourth, populist movements tend to produce charismatic leaders, who portray themselves as the embodiment of what people really think.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, each of these features has a musical parallel. The true will of the people might represent the true musical “character” of the people, which extreme-right supporters often claim is suppressed in favour of multiculturalist propaganda. The anti-elitism of populism is certainly mirrored in the hostility towards the mainstream “establishment” of the music industry, although it is interesting to note the narratives of elitism which surround much of the discussion of racialised music. The charismatic leaders of populism could have their equals in the relative musical celebrities of extreme-right music, particularly Ian Stuart Donaldson. Perhaps most evident, however, is the tendency to use “low” language and style, particularly in the espousing of genres and lyrics which are considered crude and base by the mainstream. These features will recur throughout the following discussion of class and music, but it is worth taking a moment to articulate the significance of class in extreme-right ideologies.

### **Economic and Cultural Class in Extreme-Right Ideology**

Extreme-right class rhetoric can be delineated into economic and cultural ideologies. The economic rendering of class is used to appeal to the economic insecurity of active and potential supporters, being offered as evidence of the active oppression of the white race by conspiratorial Others. The conspiracy has a number of

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<sup>3</sup> Roger Eatwell, ‘Introduction: the new extreme right challenge’, in Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.) *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*. London & New York: Routledge, 2004, pp.11-12.

manifestations, such as the supremacist notion of ZOG keeping the innate greatness of the white race down, or the belief that political elites allowed mass immigration for their own ends, and in so doing decreased the employment prospects of the “indigenous” population. This rhetoric of class is an appeal to people’s pockets, with the suggestion that the adoption of extreme-right policies will lead to increased prosperity.

While economic class acts as evidence to support extreme-right conspiracies, the use of class identities by the extreme right does not necessarily reflect strict demographics within the movement. Economically speaking, the success of some extreme-right musical ventures has relatively enriched those behind them, while others have supported the movement with wealth earned elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Culturally speaking, some prominent figures in the extreme right have graduated from—and even been employed by—universities, despite these institutions being generally cast as strongholds of elitism and Marxist thought. Indeed, extreme-right movements have attempted to enter into campuses and university life by actively courting the student population: in Britain, the National Culturists plan to target students specifically,<sup>5</sup> while there is a history of white student unions in the United States linked to extreme-right movements, most recently at Towson University in Maryland in 2012.<sup>6</sup> So while research shows that, broadly speaking, extreme-right supporters come from positions of economic insecurity, it is clear that not all extreme-right supporters fit easily into particular socioeconomic categories.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, millionaire publisher William H. Regnery founded the white-nationalist journal *Occidental Quarterly* in 2001, as well as funding the think tank behind it, the National Policy Institute (Southern Poverty Law Center, ‘The Groups’, *Intelligence Report*, Iss.122 2006, available at <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2006/summer/irreconcilable-differences/the-groups>), while before his imprisonment for repeated drink-driving offences, Vincent Bertollini invested wealth made from his computer company in the work of Christian Identity (SPLC, ‘Vincent Bertollini’, n.d., available at <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/profiles/vincent-bertollini>, both accessed 4 Jul 2013).

<sup>5</sup> “The plan is to engage university students by networking and gaining enough support to create National Culturist societies, which will receive university funding. By doing this, we can create events for university students to get involved with, keeping them away from liberal left, anti-traditionalist groups that gain support through this same method.” ‘Who are we?’ *National Culturists*, n.d., <http://nationalculturists.org/about/>, accessed 28 Feb 2013.

<sup>6</sup> *Towson’s White Student Union*, <http://towsonwsu.blogspot.co.uk/>, accessed 2 Mar 2013.

As well as an indication of economic status, class also acts as a cultural marker, a shorthand for a particular set of values and a particular code of morality. The hierarchical arrangement of “high” and “low” culture is the most obvious ascription of value to taste, but it is not a straightforward division:

For its proponents, the origins of this division lie in the religious ideas of the spiritual ascent from the earthly to the heavenly. In this model, the low is confined to the physical and material conditions of our animal existence, whereas the high is concerned with the spiritual. The low is mortal and ephemeral, whereas the high is immortal and eternal. For its opponents, on the other hand, the metaphor maps directly onto class divisions that embody hierarchies of social power. Low culture is that of the oppressed, and high culture that of the oppressors.<sup>7</sup>

The latter equation of cultural hierarchy with class division is fundamental to Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, for which he argues that culture plays a significant part in the ordering of class relationships, and in the reproduction of these relationships over time.<sup>8</sup> This approach allows for an understanding of class more focused on value and culture than economic wealth and status, but there are problems with Bourdieu’s analysis; perhaps most relevant from a musical perspective is that while research has shown that education and social status can be broadly related to taste, there is also evidence that musical listeners are becoming more “omnivorous”<sup>9</sup> and therefore more likely to have a wide variety of listening tastes.

Nevertheless, while it is problematic to make class categorisations on the basis of taste, the “high/low” distinctions made between certain genres reveal the significance of notions of class that are tied to the genres themselves. In other words, class identities in music may not reveal anything definite about the listener (or the musician), but they do say something important about the genre. In this regard, the deliberate adoption and espousal of genres characterised as “lowbrow” or “base,” alongside the general rejection of the traditionalist wing’s high culture or elitist

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<sup>7</sup> Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.111.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* [1979], trans. by Richard Nice, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. Kern, ‘Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore’, *American Sociological Review*, Vol.61 Oct 1996, pp.900-907.

focus, demonstrates the extreme-right preoccupation with identifying with the “ordinary” people and their “lowbrow” culture. Even so, the narratives of populism can also carry strong connotations of elitism within their espousal of the lowbrow.

### **Making Elitism Racial**

The ideology of white supremacism clearly constructs a racial hierarchy which is deemed to be more relevant than intra-racial class divides. At times, such white supremacism is justified through equation with highbrow forms. One of the “sticky threads”<sup>10</sup> on Stormfront is a plea for others to listen to more classical music, which is viewed as proof of white supremacy:

I want to challenge *everyone* to listen to more classical music. It is the *best* music ever made by the most talented musicians ever to walk the earth. The more you listen to it, the more you understand that such beauty, such majesty, can only be the work of white [sic] FOR WHITES. The masters, Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Vivaldi (to name but a few). These men were on a level of godlike inspiration that no other race has ever produced an equal. This music is so timeless, breathtaking, and spiritual, that it will live on forever as the theme, the anthem, of the white race. Only if we fail to insure [sic] the survival of our white race will the beauty of classical music disappear from the universe. We need to make “being white” not only popular and cool again, but we need to make “being white” POWERFUL again. Listening to the classics FORCES you to be white. It promotes cultivation, wisdom, civilization, honor, nobility, tranquility, refinement, manners, pride, struggle, peace, and glory. No other music can do this. When you listen to the classics, you are taking part in a honorable and noble tradition of being white.... Remember the Third Reich [sic] and Richard Wagner. This is OUR MUSIC and we can build an empire with it.<sup>11</sup>

Here, the highbrow nature of classical music—as well as its promotion of civilisation and refinement—is equated with race, rather than with a particular economic stratum.

The racial application of elite taste is not an innovation; the terms “highbrow” and “lowbrow” were derived from the skull-measuring practice of phrenology, and in particular the distinction of “Anglo-Saxon” superiority over other whites and non-

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<sup>10</sup> Meaning a thread that has been “stuck” to the top of the forum, so it will not fall down the list. Sticky threads are therefore likely to be restricted to topics considered to be of prime importance, as they will always be featured prominently and near the top of forums.

<sup>11</sup> ‘A chance to BE WHITE: Classical Music’, *Stormfront*, created 7 Feb 2010, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t680327/>, accessed 27 Jul 2013, emphasis in original.

whites.<sup>12</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller's description of the use of classical music in a similar supremacist manner in the USA a century ago mirrors the intentions of the contemporary extreme right:

Opera and orchestral music may have epitomized upper-class refinement, but they also came to signify white cultural supremacy in an era characterized by the racial violence of lynching and Jim Crow segregation, as well as by the growing fear that white children were, in the words of an influential editorial in 1913, "falling prey to the collective soul of the negro through the influence of what is popularly known as 'rag time' music."<sup>13</sup>

This long history of regarding classical music as "white" is reproduced in extreme-right ideology, conflating a number of assumptions about race and class.

Similar narratives of elitism surround folk music, narratives which are embedded in the history of the genre. As Matthew Gelbart has shown, the concept of folk music arose around the same time as that of classical or art music in the eighteenth century (marking a shift from the categorisation of music by social function), and was driven by the nationalist and Romantic projects of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The concept of "the folk" was flavoured by Herder's argument that it was from the common people that the character of a nation could be divined, and an interpretation of Rousseau which led to the concept of the "noble savage," the idea that mankind was at its purest and best in the state closest to nature. Both of these ideas looked to the rural "folk" as the last remnants of a purer state of humanity, before the advancement of societal hierarchies and industrialisation.

Even though many followers of these thinkers recognised folk as a legitimate art form in its own right, there were some who attempted to reconcile the idealised ideology of folk with its position in the lower strata of society. Even some who recognised artistic qualities in folk music sought to dissociate it from its working-class origins. At the beginning of the 20th-century there was a school of thought

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<sup>12</sup> Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp.221-222.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp.163-164.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp.6-9.

typified by John Robert Moore, who believed that the folk “are unable to create anything equal to the songs which they have received,”<sup>15</sup> essentially casting the “folk” as vessels, incapable of the creativity demonstrated in the material they possessed. In a similar vein, the influential American folklorist William Wells Newell argued that the folk preserved rather than created, and that existing music was the result of a previous era in which the “best minds” concerned themselves with their composition.<sup>16</sup>

This elitist doctrine achieved its fullest expression in the work of Hans Naumann, who in 1922 proposed the concept of *gesunkenes Kulturgut*, literally sunken cultural materials. Naumann believed that folklore originated among the *Oberschicht* or upper stratum of society, and was then imitated and corrupted by the unsophisticated *Unterschicht* or lower class. The reproductions of the *Unterschicht* were degenerate imitations, representing the ignorant and debased nature of the lower classes.<sup>17</sup> The ideas of Naumann and his contemporaries were later incorporated into the Nazi ideology of the master race, with Naumann himself a member of the party.

Similar ideology was evident in Britain. Cecil Sharp, the figurehead of the first folk revival, saw folk song as “the heritage ... of the Arian [sic] race” and in opposition to “our system of education [which] is, at present, too cosmopolitan.”<sup>18</sup> Sharp has been accused of taking a similar view to Naumann, wishing to preserve folk culture for middle-class edification, while salvaging it from the perceived brutalities of its working-class practitioners. The attitudes of collectors towards their musical informers were also less than enlightened; Sharp, for instance, thought he

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<sup>15</sup> Georgina Boyes, ‘New Directions—Old Destinations: A Consideration of the Role of the Tradition-Bearer in Folksong Research,’ in Ian Russell (ed.), *Singer, Song and Scholar*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986, p.10.

<sup>16</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, p.92.

<sup>17</sup> Hasan El-Shamy, ‘Gesunkenes Kulturgut’, in Thomas Green (ed.), *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music and Art (Vol.1)*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997, pp.419-422.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival: 1944-2002*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, p.9.



was saving folksongs not only for posterity, but from the barbarities and incivilities of those who performed them.

As Sharp's integration of Aryanism and anti-cosmopolitanism into his argument demonstrates, the rhetoric of folk "purity" had racial implications, and members of Sharp's circle were associated with Rolf Gardiner, a prominent British fascist.<sup>19</sup> Even the way the history of the Folk Revival is told has hints of the authoritarian principles behind fascism: the activities of a few collectors are privileged over the activities of the many thousands involved in the movement.<sup>20</sup> The elevation of these chosen few—practically all men—above the masses from which they draw their esteem has echoes of Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch* or Superman, who would rise above the herd of ordinary men, overcoming nihilism to re-establish a more spiritual community (ideas which were famously influential on Nazi ideology). While it is overly simplistic to suggest that folk music in general, or the original Folk Revival in particular, is Fascist or extreme-right in nature, both certainly had the potential to be interpreted in such a way by inclined individuals.

It is difficult to know how significant these elitist narratives surrounding folk music have been in influencing extreme-right appropriation, particularly since folk music is also associated with working-class values (see below). What is certain is that folk music has taken on a significant role in the cultural activity of the extreme right, and that aspects of the cultural elitism that have characterised some ideologies of folk are mirrored by racial elitism in folk's use by the extreme right.

The elitist narratives surrounding certain musics often coincide with a low opinion of other musical styles and genres, and many on the extreme right view highbrow and lowbrow genres as working in opposition, as appealing to distinct audiences. Take, for example, the plan for a Europe-wide radio network outlined by Nick Griffin to an undercover journalist:

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<sup>19</sup> Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, ideology and the English Folk Revival*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, pp.154-164.

<sup>20</sup> Boyes, *The Imagined Village*, xii.

The aim should be something like three one-hour evening slots. One would be aimed at a more cultural audience—folk music with a few classical pieces, poetry and some politically incorrect literature readings. The second would be based on more mainstream, commercial sounding, melodic rock. The third would play the kind of music still more popular among the independent base of the whole White Power music scene—skinhead Oi! music and heavy metal.<sup>21</sup>

Griffin is clearly hoping to reach out to all classes, but in explicitly targeting a “more cultural audience” he regards certain musical tastes as being segregated along class lines.

Griffin hoped to harness the economic and political support of skinheads partly through this radio network, but his opinion of them was that they were “scum.”<sup>22</sup> William Pierce revealed a similarly low opinion while justifying the National Alliance moving into popular music, implying that current members belong on a higher plane than the “millions of White Americans” who are used to such music.<sup>23</sup> Pierce’s position is reminiscent of David Lane’s statement expressing bemused joy at the success of “White Power” bands, since his own taste is for classical music; both seem keen to point out that while such music can serve a useful purpose for the political cause, they are above such things themselves. Clearly then there is still some tension between different factions of the extreme right along class lines,<sup>24</sup> but as the following discussion shows, the musical culture of the extreme right is overwhelmingly of a populist nature.

### **Representing the “Ordinary”**

Many of the genres which are particularly significant within extreme-right music have strong class connotations, and the majority of these associations are with particular aspects of working-class culture. Oi!, the foundational genre of the current extreme-right music scene, stemmed from punk, which is itself generally

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<sup>21</sup> *Searchlight*, No.264 Jun 1997, pp.9-10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in *Searchlight*, No.295 Jan 2000, p.5.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. ‘Problems with our Movement—The Class Divide’, *Stormfront*, created 26 Jun 2008, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t502133/>, accessed 28 Jul 2013.

characterised as a reaction against the elaborate and pretentious musical styles of the time, particularly prog rock, as well as the commercial nature of the music industry. Immediately, this origin story sets up a class conflict, or at least an aesthetic one, between the simplistic and apparently democratic DIY (do-it-yourself) of punk and the established, hierarchical, elite music industry.

While punk has been described as a youth cult, it has also been characterised as having a class dimension, particularly in its supposed expression of street culture. For sympathetic left-wing ideologues, punk was a youth- and class-based political expression on left-wing lines, an interpretation predicated on the music being an accurate reflection of young working-class life, as Simon Frith has explained.<sup>25</sup> As Frith suggests, there was a significant element of opportunism in this position, especially since exceptions, such as racist skinhead fans or bands, were either ignored or dismissed as not in keeping with the true spirit of punk. This opportunism is reflected by the extreme-right appropriation of Oi!. Just as left-wing organisations, particularly Rock Against Racism, were somewhat successful in associating punk in general with left-wing politics, the extreme right was successful in appropriating Oi! for its own cause. Because of the class associations the genre already had, this appropriation necessarily entailed a class dimension.

Although folk music has elitist connotations, as explored above, it also has historical associations with the idea of “ordinary” people and everyday life. While the first Folk Revival contained elements of politics, often conservative, the second Revival was much more obvious in its political aspirations, which were overwhelmingly of the left.<sup>26</sup> The extent to which this is so is demonstrated by a distinction within the NF in the 1980s, in which “Traditional folk was acceptable because of its origins in some (mythical) British past; modern folk was unacceptable

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<sup>25</sup> Simon Frith, ‘Formalism, Realism and Leisure: The case of punk’ [1980], in *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, pp.69-70.

<sup>26</sup> I use the terms first and second folk revival to cover roughly the periods 1885-1920 and 1940-1970 respectively.

because it purveyed ‘boring neo-marxist ideas.’”<sup>27</sup> During this period, folk was frequently and loudly proclaimed by the left to be the domain of the working class, setting up an ideology of authenticity in which the music belongs to the working class, clearly in contrast to the idea that folk music needs to be saved from them.

Country music has been said to embrace “a key Romantic mythology of the sacredness of the folkloric ordinary,”<sup>28</sup> in a way that sees it serve as an American folk music. Some histories would mistakenly have country as an authentically white music evolving outside of mainstream popular culture, while even those who acknowledge outside influences still emphasise the folk origins of the music:

Commercial country music developed out of the folk culture of the rural South. Although it has absorbed styles, songs, instruments, and influences from a multitude of nonwhite and noncountry sources, the music has been created and disseminated largely by rural dwellers within the mainstream of the white Protestant Anglo-Celtic tradition.<sup>29</sup>

As well as this association with folk purity, country music is strongly associated with the working class, both in its demographics and in its values.

As the examples of Oi!, country and folk demonstrate, many of the genres found in extreme-right music have pre-existing associations with working-class culture. Indeed, the growing popularity of metal—which has its origins in working-class Birmingham, as well as an audience that was, at least in its early days, white, male and working class<sup>30</sup>—provides another example of this association, although arguably the class identity is less significant to the conception of metal as a genre. It

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<sup>27</sup> John Street, *Rebel Rock: The Politics of Popular Music*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, p.53.

<sup>28</sup> Aaron A. Fox, ‘White Trash Alchemies of the Abject Sublime: Country as “Bad” Music’, in Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno (eds.), *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, New York & London: Routledge, 2004, pp.43-44.

<sup>29</sup> Bill C. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A.: A fifty year history*, Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1968, viii.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993, x & p.3.

is not my intention to analyse the class association of these genres here,<sup>31</sup> but it is worth pointing out that the use of these genres is combined, albeit to a limited extent, with hostility towards the middle class and the bourgeoisie.

### **Hostility to the Class Outsider**

Part of the construction of the working-class identity of these genres involved articulating the inauthentic nature of other genres. This was a particularly important component of Oi!, which was in large part considered to be in opposition to the middle class punk mainstream:

[P]unk was never any spontaneous street rebellion made good, as the myths would have it. More like a weekend exercise in shock, courtesy of the oh so trendy fashion and art colleges. And all this a million miles away from the snotty nosed kids in their snorkel coats, too busy booting a ball around a sprawling council estate to lead the charge of the punk brigade.<sup>32</sup>

The view that punk in general is not properly working class is probably predicated on the term's nebulous nature, being applied to a variety of disparate bands. Some musicians did have links to art schools and hippy culture, while Joe Strummer of The Clash was revealed to be a public-school-educated son of a diplomat.<sup>33</sup> Such examples were at odds with punk's rhetoric of representing the sound of working-class street culture, and left it open to accusations of being merely an art-school pose.

Being working class was, apparently in contrast, an integral aspect of skinhead culture and identity. One of the most bellicose expressions of this class

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<sup>31</sup> On punk, Dave Laing cites a survey which found punk musicians were 57% working class and 43% middle class (Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, p.121). See also Paul Fryer, 'Punk and the new wave of British rock: Working class heroes and art school attitudes', *Popular Music and Society*, Vol.10 No.4 1986, pp.1-15; David Simonelli, 'Anarchy, Pop and Violence: Punk Rock Subculture and the Rhetoric of Class, 1976-78', *Contemporary British History*, Vol.16 No.2, 2002, pp.121-144. On class and country music, see Jock Mackay, 'Populist Ideology and Country Music', in George Lewis (ed.), *All That Glitters: Country Music in America*, Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993, pp.285-304. On folk music, see Fred Woods, *Folk Revival: the Rediscovery of a National Music*, Poole: Blandford House, 1979, and for a broader discussion of folk authenticity, Mark Willhardt, 'Available rebels and folk authenticities: Michelle Shocked and Billy Bragg', in Ian Peddie (ed.), *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, pp. 30-48.

<sup>32</sup> George Marshall, *Spirit of '69: A Skinhead Bible* [1991], 2nd edition, Dunoon: S.T. Publishing, 1994, p.67.

<sup>33</sup> Fryer, 'Punk and the new wave of British rock', p.5.

identity was through hostility towards those perceived as middle-class; the early skinhead subculture was particularly belligerent towards hippy culture, a hostility which Murray Healy argues is partially motivated by gender ideology and the valuing of the protestant work ethic:

In the late nineteenth century, effeminacy was associated with the idle aristocracy, objectionable on the grounds that it was a symptom of excessive cross-gender attachment which resulted in the disorder of men's "natural" mastery over women.... This utilitarian gendering of class is still evident in the skinheads' puritan endorsement of the work ethic and repudiation of lazy middle-class hippies.<sup>34</sup>

While hippies, whose perceived laziness was contrasted with the virtuous work ethic of the working class, were significant early enemies for the skinheads, the same arguments could be made against various other subcultures, including, eventually, "art-school" punks.

Skinhead distaste for punk seemingly also had a political aspect, particularly from the skinheads aligned with extreme-right ideology. Extreme-right biographies of Ian Stuart Donaldson claim that Skrewdriver, who had started as a punk band, became alienated from it not only because of its "hijacking" by the middle class, but also because it was perceived as becoming more and more left-wing, in no small part thanks to the pressure of the "Marxist" music press.<sup>35</sup> Oi! was thus asserted as a symbol of authentic working-class culture, while rival claims to represent the working class musically were dismissed as middle-class falsehoods. Conveniently, Oi!'s representation of the working class—at least that which was "authentic" Oi!—also corresponded with extreme-right ideology.

Brutal Attack's 'Middle Class Fools' (*Stronger Than Before*, Rock-O-Rama, 1986) is based on the undermining role the middle class plays, while partly outlining a revenge fantasy over a repetitive three-chord backing:

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<sup>34</sup> Murray Healy, *Gay Skins: Class, Masculinity and Queer Appropriation*, London: Cassell, 1996, p. 55.

<sup>35</sup> Joe Pearce, *Skrewdriver—The First Ten Years—The Way It's Got To Be!* London: Skrewdriver Services, 1987; *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004, V. <http://www.skrewdriver.org/diamond.html>, accessed 31 Jul 2010.

Middle class fool, I judge you;  
 And as the boot comes down what you gonna do?  
 You'd better run and hide, and stay away;  
 To see you in a cell would really make my day.  
 [chorus]  
 So tell me how can I win?  
 Show me where I should begin;  
 Can't take no more of their rules;  
 Can't listen to these middle class fools.

One other remarkable instance of class politics is found in Ian Stuart Donaldson's cover of Elvis Presley's 'In the Ghetto' (*No Turning Back*, Rock-O-Rama, 1989), in which each occurrence of the chorus line "In the Ghetto" is followed by "White Ghettos." Less flattering lyrics are also changed; "he learns to steal" becomes "he learns white pride," "he steals a car" becomes "he drives his car" and "he tries to run" is changed to "he orders his life." An outro is also added:

And his mother cries;  
 White pride;  
 And his mother cries;  
 White Pride.

The song is not discussed in the biographies of Donaldson, nor seemingly on messageboards, perhaps because the point of the cover is hard to discern. It is possible that Donaldson is insisting that the poverty of the ghettos is also felt by whites, while the elimination of the lyrics regarding stealing suggests that whites deal with the circumstances of poverty in a virtuous way. The insertion of white pride is ambiguous, since it seems to offer no redemption for the song's subject.

Overwhelmingly, class hostility is aimed towards "elites," generally characterised as rich capitalists or corrupt politicians. Both of these groups can take on supposedly racial characteristics, particularly in their conflation with Judaism, but this is not absolute; for example, Blue Eyed Devils' 'Total War' (*Holocaust 2000*, Tri-State Terror, 1998):

Take the so-called lawmakers and put them against the wall;  
 No mercy for the enemy, I don't care if they are white;  
 Because they have my skin colour doesn't make their actions right;  
 ...  
 Class war, total fucking war.

Bound For Glory's 'Fall of the Tyrants' (*Over the Top*, Rock-O-Rama, 1992) combines hostility towards capitalism with a promise of revolution:

Living for pleasure whatever the measure, only caring about your own wealth;  
Enslaving the people to support your own evil, you don't care about your nation's health;  
But now the people have risen, they've made a decision, revolution it will start tonight;  
To take back the gold that they once had stole and return it to the people's right.

This hostility towards organised capital must still reconcile with extreme hostility towards Marxist ideals, something which is confusingly conflated in Skrewdriver's 'Blood and Honour' (*Blood & Honour*, Rock-O-Rama, 1985):

Marxists' greedy hands around our throats;  
Bankers buying up your lives and sitting back to gloat.

Frequently, Marxism is dismissed as a deceptive plot designed to keep the white working class down, and thus it is a deceptive and inauthentic representation of working-class values. In contrast, the extreme right sets itself up as the true embodiment of the working class, so long as it is white.

Hostility towards elites is therefore frequently contrasted with valourisation of the working class, expressed here in Bound For Glory's 'Eternal Flame' (*When the Hammer Falls*, Rock-O-Rama, 1991):

The poor get poorer and the rich get richer, while sitting on their ass;  
It wasn't them who built this country, it was the White working class.

Final War's 'Pride and Tradition' (*Glory Unending*, Panzerfaust, 2002), meanwhile, asserts that, although the white working class is defamed, it is still strong:

Respected members of the working class;  
Paying our taxes and busting our ass;  
We're the ones who always get the blame;  
But we stand proud and we have no shame.

Hostility towards political elites, particularly because of their perceived betrayal of their people, is a significant presence in softer material as well, such as in 'Nothing Bloody Works' (*West Wind*, Great White Records, 2007), which emphasises the BNP's claim to represent "decent" society in a country that has lost its integrity and values because of corrupt politicians:

I went looking for a phonebox to try and call a friend;  
And one that wasn't vandalised, I found one in the end;



It's Blair's new Britain and nothing bloody works;  
It's Blair's new Britain and his wife grabs all the perks;  
It's Blair's new Britain moving jobs across the sea;  
Nothing left behind for you and me.

## The Sound of the Street

Football, and especially the violence articulated around it ... provided one arena for the expression of the Skinheads' concern with a particular, collective, masculine self conception, involving an identification of masculinity with physical toughness, and an unwillingness to back down in the face of "trouble." The violence also involved the Mobs' stress on collective solidarity and mutual support in times of "need."<sup>36</sup>

Two further points about the vocal delivery of Oi! seem pertinent here. First, the intensity and anger with which the vocals are delivered, often bordering on an amelodic shout, suggest that the white working class is not otherwise being heard. Secondly, this vocal style carries the potential for mass participation, requiring

<sup>37</sup> 'Rage & Fury', *Blood & Honour* (UK), Iss.14 n.d., pp.3-4.

minimal vocal range or musical skill. This means not only that audiences can easily join in, but also that vocal ability—other than perhaps volume—is not necessarily a prerequisite for becoming a singer in a band.

A similar musical simplicity<sup>38</sup> is evident in the lineup of Oi! bands, which were linked together by instrumentation—a ‘traditional’ guitar, bass, drums and vocalist setup—with musical skill not held in high regard. Harmonically, songs often stuck to the three chord formula associated with punk, while structurally there was little deviation from the verse-chorus form. The basic nature of Oi!’s sound was in keeping with the genre’s ideological hostility towards artifice, pretension and virtuosity, while presenting its simplicity as authenticity.

Similar ideologies of authenticity permeate other genres, and are particularly significant to country music. Consider the following description of the characteristics of country music songs:

(1) they are sung by artists without formal musical training, who claim to come from working-class, southern roots; (2) they are sung in a southern, ‘twangy’ accent, using a nasal tone (as opposed to the cultivated bel canto sound taught in conservatories in Europe and North America); (3) they are accompanied by string instruments, especially the fiddle and/or steel guitar; (4) they are sung in verse-chorus-bridge form; (5) they feature lyrics that tell stories about ordinary life which are often funny or tragic; (6) they use regular meter and simple tonal harmonies (often just I-IV-V); (7) they are marked by a transparent texture, in order to ensure that words can be clearly understood at all times; and (8) they celebrate rural life and document the difficulties faced by working-class people.<sup>39</sup>

Clearly, each of these features emphasises country values of simplicity and authenticity; cultivated singing, formal training, complex arrangements and harmonic structures, lyrical subjects beyond the everyday, and layered arrangements are all rejected. Indeed, not only are they rejected, but the opposites are embraced, with country music setting itself up as the opposite of elite culture.

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<sup>38</sup> I should state that I do not intend value judgements through terms such as this: I use them because they reflect Oi!’s own ideology.

<sup>39</sup> Heather Maclachan, ‘The Greatest Rock Star Who Never Was: Garth Brooks, Chris Gaines, and Modern America’, *American Music*, Vol.26 No.2 Summer 2008, pp.197-198.

Country music is notable in that the themes expressed in its lyrics often address the “ordinary” lives of its (predominantly white) working-class audience. Alongside hip-hop, country is therefore one of the most prominent genres which “is significantly defined by the thematization of a class experience as well as the associative sounding of it,”<sup>40</sup> even if the realities of commercial radio play suggest that the genre is much more apolitical than its reputation suggests.<sup>41</sup> It is not only the words themselves, however, that transmit political and class ideologies; the sound of the music itself makes a significant statement.

### **Voice, accent and lyrics**

A major component of the communicative potential in popular music is in the voice of the singer, but not only in terms of the lyrics that are sung. At a fundamental level, the voice conveys certain characteristics of the singer, such as gender—although these cannot necessarily be inferred with absolute certainty. Frith writes that the “pop” voice is heard as “*personally* expressive ... in a way that a classical singer, even a dramatic and ‘tragic’ star like Maria Callas, is not.” The “pop” singer’s singing is heard to convey their inner self, in contrast to the classical singer whose expression is generally thought to be determined by the score.<sup>42</sup>

An important component of the singer’s perceived personality is the accent, which, although accents can be imitated, flattened and adopted, is seen as an indicator of social class. Given the dominant nature of American singers in popular music, particularly in its early development, the American accent became pervasive, even among non-American musicians. In this context, Dave Laing writes that punk’s rejection of Americanisation was very much influenced by:

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<sup>40</sup> James Smethurst, ‘Everyday people: popular music, race and the articulation and formation of class identity in the United States’, in Ian Peddie (ed.), *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, p.77.

<sup>41</sup> Robert W. Van Sickel, ‘A World without Citizenship: On (the Absence of) Politics and Ideology in Country Music Lyrics, 1960–2000’, *Popular Music and Society*, Vol.28 Iss.3, 2005, pp.313-331.

<sup>42</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p.186, Frith’s emphasis.

[David Bowie's] example of a *vocal accent* that had not been imported from America. This was an essential element for that strand in punk rock that leant towards the autobiographical rather than dramatized: "We sing in English, not mimicking some American rock singer's accent. That's just pretending to be something you ain't," said Joe Strummer of The Clash.<sup>43</sup>

In non-American countries,<sup>44</sup> the use of the American accent generally signifies one of two things: either the singer is an American, and therefore active in the suppression of "indigenous" talent; or the accent has been adopted, representing not only the singer's rejection of their heritage but an artifice, in contrast to the extreme-right's stated valuing of plain-speaking and authenticity.<sup>45</sup>

Rosenthal and Flacks make a similar argument about the non-literal communicative properties of the singing voice:

The *form* of the lyrics may also make a statement beyond anything those lyrics say. This is perhaps most obvious when singers speak in a language or accent that has traditionally been devalued, as when artists in colonized countries begin writing in their own languages instead of the mother country's tongue, or punks sing in working-class accents. Here an artist could write "nonsense" lyrics and still project a clear meaning: I am not ashamed of this language, this accent.<sup>46</sup>

As Rosenthal and Flacks point out, the language used can convey something in a similar manner to accent. In the extreme-right music scene, there are varying approaches to language, suggesting alternative significances of language itself. English is obviously the language used in the United Kingdom and the United States, and an integral characteristic of the identification of the "native" populace. In Germany, the overwhelming majority of bands sing in their native language; even when popular bands such as Landser release English-language albums to improve their standing in the international market, these are translations of music originally in German, with the Germanic releases their prime focus.

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<sup>43</sup> Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985, p.26, Laing's emphasis.

<sup>44</sup> The significance of particular accents in the USA is also important in some genres, demonstrated particularly in the use of "twang" in country music.

<sup>45</sup> Admittedly, Frith also notes that "'truth' is a matter of sound conventions, which vary from genre to genre" (*Performing Rites*, p.197). The relationship between accent and authenticity is not as relevant in metal, neither is it obvious in the material produced by extreme-right metal bands.

<sup>46</sup> Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2011, p.47, Rosenthal and Flacks' emphasis.

However, in Sweden, musicians are much more split in their use of Swedish and English, to the extent that individual bands and musicians will include both English- and Swedish-language songs on the same release. Particular approaches can be a case of conforming to a particular ideology, can evolve over time or be adapted for particular circumstances. For instance, Saga's vocals for Midgård's *Pro Patria III* (Midgård Records, 2003) were entirely in Swedish which is clearly in keeping with the album's intention to convey and appeal to a particular notion of Swedishness (the album cover uses the colours of the flag—as well as images of the flag itself—alongside other visual tropes of Sweden); Saga's other work, clearly intended for a more international audience, is exclusively in English. Ultima Thule's almost exclusive use of Swedish fits with their self-identification as a patriotic, nationalist band, rather than a racist (or racialist) one. Elsewhere, bands switch between English and Swedish with no particular consistency; Dirlewanger are a prominent example of a band which splits between English and Swedish.

It seems, therefore, that Swedish musicians are generally less concerned with speaking to their own populace; this may be because they conceive of extreme-right politics as an international phenomenon, or merely a reflection of the economic reality of making music in a relatively small country like Sweden, and it is undoubtedly helped by the advanced proficiency of English amongst the Swedish population.<sup>47</sup> However, it is also a fair reflection of practice in other countries, particularly from the emerging scene in the former USSR, where bands are more likely to include at least some English-language material.

In terms of the lyrics themselves, there are linguistic tendencies that emphasise the personal and collective nature of extreme-right ideology. Rosenthal and Flacks write that:

In any language, use of the first person plural ('we') includes listeners in a way that using the first person singular ('I') or addressing a particular person by using the second person ('you') does not.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Education First, *EF English Proficiency Index*, 2012.

<sup>48</sup> Rosenthal and Flacks, *Playing For Change*, p.47.

Of course, extreme-right music has no monopoly on first- and second-person personal pronouns, but the way they are employed is obviously influenced by the political motivations of the extreme right. Often, this entails the description of a community which will bring about political change, although at times it can take the form of chastisement. The latter is demonstrated by Skrewdriver's 'White Power' (Single, 1983, White Noise quoted in Chapter One, p.90), which describes the responsibility this community holds for the degradation of its country, while distinguishing between the "them" who are sending the country down the drain, and the "we" who let it happen. However, while some songs portray a sense of collective responsibility such as this, often those held responsible for the oppression or degradation of the white race are not regarded as part of the collective; rather, the collective has been betrayed by race traitors, as in Angry Aryans' 'Joe 6-Pack' (*Racially Motivated Violence*, Resistance Records, 2002):

Self-centred whitey, all you care for is you;  
Six pack in your grip, by-product of the Jew;

...

Sold out your pride for a six pack;

...

Lazy whites, self destruction;  
Lazy whites, liberal corruption;  
Lazy whites, drug addiction;  
Lazy whites, fatal condition.

And similarly in Aggressive Force's 'Closet Coward' (*Aggressive Force*, Panzerfaust, 2000):

I try to talk to you, but you're ignorant still;  
You live your life with your head in the sand;  
You can't stand up, you're not a man;

...

You're a closet coward, you're one of a kind;  
You don't speak your views, you don't speak your mind;

You sit and let the world pass by;  
Never say a word, you're living a lie.

And again in Saga's 'Hypocrite' (*On My Own*, Midgård Records, 2007):

You complain about immigration, you really make me sick;  
It was your vote that opened the border you filthy hypocrite;  
You say one thing but do another, just how weak can one man be?  
You're the reason for our misery, so blame yourself and don't blame me.

[chorus]  
You're the one, the one to blame;  
People like you cause us pain;  
You're the one, the one to blame;  
Start to act, but use your brain.

These examples demonstrate the common, albeit not universal, difference in the usage of “we” and “you,” with the latter being accusatory and castigating. The collective is more often portrayed as the body with the potential of effecting real and positive change, as in Bound for Glory’s ‘Never Again!’ (*Never Again*, Thor Records, 1997) (which also places the blame on others as “you”):

Truth is our weapon, faith is our defence;  
Let the cry of freedom ring as we climb over the fence;  
Remember the fallen, and the lives they had gave;  
Standing against your tanks vowing never to be slaves.  
[chorus]  
Never again will your tanks roll through;  
Never again, to be sold out by a chosen few;  
Never again will you rape the motherland;  
Never again, your demise lies in our hands.

Unsurprisingly, this collective will use its strength to bring about a new age, as in Landser’s ‘Das Reich kommt wieder’ (*Das Reich kommt wieder*, Wotan Records, 1992):

We know we shall win;  
All others will fly out of here;  
You see our flags, you hear our songs;  
This state is going under and the Reich will rise again.<sup>49</sup>

As well as imagining a community through the frequent use of “we” and “us,” singers also emphasise their own involvement and investment in extreme-right politics. Rahowa’s ‘Ode to a Dying People’ (*Cult of the Holy War*, 1995, Resistance Records), offering a very pessimistic perspective, indicates the narrator’s pain at the apparent fall of his race:

Disease encroaching on all I hold dear;  
Somehow I got to get my soul out of here;  
Heart of agony, faint burning hope;  
I'm finding it hard to try to cope.  
[chorus]

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<sup>49</sup> Wir wissen wir werden siegen; Ganz andere werden hier raus fliegen; Seht ihr uns're Fahnen, hört ihr uns're Lieder; Dieser Staat geht unter und das Reich kommt wieder.

If this is the way it ends, if this is the way my race ends;  
If this is the way it ends, I can't bear to witness.

Kara's 'Here and Now' (*Under a Fading Moon*, Brotherhood Records, 2007), meanwhile, is an offer of salvation, which notably accommodates "you" into "we":

The anger, it swells deep in my gut;  
As they chop and change and cut;  
I want so much to open your eyes;  
I need you to see their lies;  
...  
Take my hand, knot your fingers through mine;  
Walk with me, leave the darkness behind;  
Every minute from this minute now;  
We'll do what we like anyhow.

Singers therefore position themselves as part of the collective by emphasising their investment and involvement in the extreme-right cause, but they also cast themselves as selfless and inspirational, capable of guiding others onto the right path.

One other notable aspect of extreme-right lyrics is the frequency with which explicit and racist language is employed. The use of such language by the broader extreme right is more variable, with websites such as *Stormfront* banning racial epithets and political parties seeking to avoid damaging controversy, but a selection of song titles demonstrate their prevalence in music: consider Dirlwanger's 'Nigger Season' (Single, Rebelles Européens 1990), Midtown Bootboy's 'Coon Hunt' (*Unfinished Business*, Stormfront Records, 1996), Jew Slaughter's 'Jew Slaughter Whore' (*Alcoholocaust*, Micetrap Records, 2002) Racist Redneck Rebels' 'Jungle Bunny' (*Keep the Hate Alive!*, Micetrap Records, 2003), Evil Incarnate's 'Killer of Faggots' (*Smashing Rainbows*, Fetch the Rope Records, 2007), and Brassic's 'Benders' (*Voice of Freedom*, Hostile Class Productions, 2010). The chorus of Landser's 'Afrika Lied' (*Republik der Strolche*, NS Records, 1995) is representative of the simplistic rhetoric which runs through much of this material:

Africa for apes, Europe for whites.<sup>50</sup>

Such language clearly has a vicarious nature, but it is also in keeping with the extreme right's general disdain for political correctness, and thus in line with the

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<sup>50</sup> "Afrika für Affen, Europa für Weiße."



populist ideal of embodying what the people *really* think—but mostly do not dare to say—and the linked populist tendency to use “low” language. It is notable that hostility towards florid and pretentious language, and the valuing of plain-speaking and “telling it like it is,” are prominent features of the genres discussed in this chapter.

## Conclusion

The extent to which extreme-right portrayals of class identities in music reflect some deeper reality of the music itself is questionable. The perceived authenticity of country music, with its apparent sincerity and realism, ignores the importance of commercialism in the genre’s development.<sup>51</sup> The particularly masculine class identities associated with Oi! were derived from a black subculture and musical styles. Narratives of folk authenticity and purity ignore the class contradictions within its history, as well as the influence of popular music on much of its repertoire. And of course, even within extreme-right narratives of particular musics there are class contradictions, particularly in the use of supposedly “low” music to assert racial superiority.

In addition, the preoccupation of identifying with the “ordinary” people does not necessarily extend to identifying with quantitatively popular music. Commercially successful genres such as rap, dance and pop, particularly those associated with black culture, are as a rule avoided by extreme-right musicians and disdained by supporters. Such forms are regarded as inauthentic in terms of portraying class culture; in extreme-right populist ideology, such mass-musical forms do not accurately mirror the virtues of class culture. Clearly, this is in part because the extreme right understands the working class in terms of its whiteness, and each of these genres—Oi!, country, folk—is in part valued for supposedly expressing this

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<sup>51</sup> Pecknold, *The Selling Sound*.

whiteness. But while race is integral, such a class-based rhetoric, particularly with a populist tendency, must be dependent on class identity.

The populist depiction of class can be distilled to a binary creation of “us” and “them,” a distinction that is flexible enough to encompass, among other things, racial, gender, religious and class differences. Extreme-right lyrics commonly literally incorporate the language of “us” and “them,” of “we” and “you.” Furthermore, Oi!, folk and country music all have as part of their identity, or at least in some interpretations of their identity, a character of anti-elitism, which in turn is predicated on identifying with the “common man.”

Such an attitude is a crucial component of populism, which is based on an anti-elitist and anti-establishment perspective. The association of these genres with “lowbrow” culture—even if folk arguably has a simultaneous identity as art music—conforms to the populist tendency to embrace “low” rather than “high” styles, just as the rejection of political correctness and use of explicit language represents the use of “low” language. This, along with the use of genres which reflect the extreme-right view of class cultural values rather than dominant taste, all suggest that extreme-right music might be referred to more accurately as “populist” rather than “popular.”

The populist nature of extreme-right music can seem inharmonious with the strand of extreme-right ideology which values “high” art, particularly classical music, but the elitism associated with such forms is interpreted as a reflection of racial supremacy rather than as signifying social divisions. Thus, there is no ideological dissonance in embracing populist music and high art music; the former becomes a statement of values and a repudiation of the degenerate elements within society, while the latter is taken to prove beyond doubt the absolute supremacy of the white race.



## Chapter Five:

### Violence is in Style: Music, Masculinity and Violence

*“Musical revolution spreading through the land;  
Big city white boys, ready to make a stand;  
Angry, tattooed, and scarred;  
We're really a nasty bunch;  
Stand in the way of our pride;  
We'll give you the knockout punch.”*

Bound For Glory, ‘Musical Terrorists’, *Glory Awaits*, BFG Productions, 1997.

*“If you’ve read the Turner Diaries, you know the year 2000 there’ll be the uprising and all that, racial violence on the streets. My aim was political. It was to cause a racial war in this country. There’d be a backlash from the ethnic minorities, then all the white people will go out and vote BNP.”*

David Copeland, London Nailbomber, *Panorama*, BBC, 30 June 2000.

*“[A] great part of the present pathology of our society can be ascribed properly to its feminization over the past century or two, to its loss of its former masculine spirit and masculine character.”*

William Pierce, ‘The Feminization of America’, *American Dissident Voices*, 2011, p.320.

Typically, extreme-right movements have been dominated by men, and particularly concerned with cultivating an outlook which appeals to them. Women have risen to positions of authority in some extreme-right movements—most notably Marine Le Pen, leader of the French Front National—but these are exceptions in an ideology which broadly concerns itself with the promotion of masculine interests. Each of the main subgroupings of the extreme right demonstrates this masculine primacy. Ferber argues that “[t]he central project of the contemporary white supremacist movement is the articulation of a white, male identity.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the composition of the militia movement is primarily male, with the few women tending to be wives of male members.<sup>2</sup> Even after modernisation, voting data show that extreme-right political parties still appeal predominately to male voters.<sup>3</sup>

Alongside its maleness, the extreme right is renowned for its association with violence. This reputation is typically associated with the men of the movement, with women expected to be submissive. Such gender roles are not restricted to the extreme right, with Spierenburg noting:

[I]n societies with pronounced notions of honor and shame, a person's reputation often depends on physical bravery and a forceful response to insults. ... In almost every society, male honor is considered to be quite different from female honor. Men may take pride in attacking fellow men, whether they use this force to protect women or for other reasons. Passivity, in violent and peaceful situations, is a cardinal feminine virtue.<sup>4</sup>

These ideals are, in the context of the extreme right, a reaction to contemporary politics of gender equality, with the emphasis on violence to empower men who otherwise feel emasculated by society. There is a strong link between various

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<sup>1</sup> Abby L. Ferber, *White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Kimmel and Abby Ferber, “‘White Men Are This Nation’: Right-Wing Militias and the Restoration of Rural American Masculinity”, *Rural Sociology* Vol.65 No.4, 2000, p.590.

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Lubbers, Mérove Gijsberts and Peer Scheepers, ‘Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe’, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.41 2002, pp.345-378; Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin, ‘Angry White Men: Individual and Contextual Predictors of Support for the British National Party’, *Political Studies*, Vol.58 2010, pp.1-25.

<sup>4</sup> Pieter Spierenburg, ‘Masculinity, Violence, and Honor: An Introduction’, in Spierenburg (ed.), *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998, p.2.

extreme-right groups and violence;<sup>5</sup> this chapter explores the specific significance of music to this violence.

It is beyond the scope of this research to determine whether extreme-right music plays a role in instigating and influencing violence, or whether pre-existing violent intention is merely reflected by the music produced, but it is relevant to examine the various ways that music is used to create spaces in which violence can be imagined, valorised and enacted. This chapter demonstrates various ways in which music and violence interact, showing: that violence is a core component of idealised masculinity portrayed in much extreme-right music, particularly through the warrior image; that violence is part of musical subcultural ritual (particularly the violence of skinhead gigs); that music is used to articulate hostility towards enemies; that lyrics frequently assert that violence will lead to a new dawn through an imagined revolution. The chapter concludes by examining some specific acts of violence and the extreme-right music associated with them.

### **Masculinity, Music and Violence**

Images of warriors are central to the extreme right; not only are archetypes such as Vikings and Crusaders lionised, but analogies are drawn between historical struggles and the contemporary extreme-right movement (see Chapter Six). With this centrality of warrior imagery, it is not surprising that the main genres and styles associated with extreme-right music cater to a sense of aggression and violence. These genres are essentially policed to maintain their masculinity, emphasising the centrality of violence in the extreme-right conception of masculine values.

Female musicians are generally excluded from the genres associated with this notion of masculinity, finding success instead in genres more “appropriate” to their femininity, particularly folk and more mainstream rock. This exclusion may in part

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<sup>5</sup> The violent activities associated with the extreme right are monitored by a number of organisations, particularly the Anti-Defamation League ([www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)) and the Southern Poverty Law Center ([www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)) in the USA, *Searchlight* magazine in Great Britain, *Expo* magazine in Sweden and the *Antifaschistisches Infoblatt* magazine in Germany.

be predicated on the style and excessively physical nature of singing, particularly the “shout-along” style adopted by many Oi! and rock bands; however, it is undoubtedly also a result of prejudice, with the few women who have attempted to make music in “masculine” styles meeting with little success.

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While concerns about music’s ability to challenge established order have been voiced from at least Classical antiquity,<sup>6</sup> the academic study of the relationship between music and violence has been a neglected area, although some notable work has emerged in recent years. Studies have previously tended to examine the amount of violent content in music lyrics and videos,<sup>7</sup> and the relationship between this content and the attitudes towards violence of listeners,<sup>8</sup> as well as looking broadly at claims that particular genres incite violence more readily than others.<sup>9</sup> There has also been

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Plato, *The Republic* [c.380 B.C.E.], translated by Desmond Lee, Second Edition, London: Penguin Books, 1974.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Sherman and Joseph Dominick, ‘Violence and Sex in Music Videos: TV and Rock ‘n’ Roll’, *Journal of Communication*, Vol.36 Iss.1 Mar 1986, pp.79-93; Christine Hall Hansen and Ranald Hansen, ‘The Influence of Sex and Violence on the Appeal of Rock Music Videos’, *Communication Research* Vol.17 No.2 Apr 1990, pp.212-234; Edward Armstrong, ‘The Rhetoric of Violence in Rap and Country Music’, *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol.63 No.1 Jan 1993, pp.64-78; Michael Rich, Elizabeth Woods, Elizabeth Goodman, S. Jean Emans and Robert DuRant, ‘Aggressors or Victims: Gender and Race in Music Video Violence’, *Pediatrics* Vol.101 No.4 Apr 1998, pp.669-674; Edward Armstrong, ‘Gangsta Misogyny: A Content Analysis of the Portrayals of Violence Against Women in Rap Music, 1987-1993’, *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, Vol.8 No.2 2001, pp.96-126; Stacy Smith and Aaron Boyson, ‘Violence in Music Videos: Examining the Prevalence and Context of Physical Aggression’, *Journal of Communication*, Vol.52 Iss.1 Jan 2002, pp.61-83.

<sup>8</sup> Janet St. Lawrence and Doris Joyner, ‘The Effects of Sexually Violent Rock Music on Males’ Acceptance of Violence Against Women’, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol.15 No.1 Mar 1991, pp.49-63; James Johnson, Mike Adams, Leslie Ashburn and William Reed, ‘Differential gender effects of exposure to rap music on African American adolescents’ acceptance of teen dating violence’, *Sex Roles* Vol.33 Iss.7-8 Oct 1995, pp.597-605; Stephen Webster, Cynthia Crown, Gerald Quatman and Martin Heesacker, ‘The Influence of Sexually Violent Rap Music on Attitudes of Men with Little Prior Exposure’, *Psychology of Women Quarterly* Vol.21 No.4 Dec 1997, pp.497-508; Peter Fischer and Tobias Greitemeyer, ‘Music and Aggression: The Impact of Sexual-Aggressive Song Lyrics on Aggression-Related Thoughts, Emotions, and Behavior Toward the Same and the Opposite Sex’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol.32 No.9 Sep 2006, pp.1165-1176.

<sup>9</sup> Amal Malek, ‘Violence in Language: Is Rap Music Causing Violence in America?’, *Violence, Realities and Concerns*, Beirut: Notre Dame University Press, pp.107-115.

some recent work examining the role of music as a weapon in itself,<sup>10</sup> alongside work which considers the relationship between music and violent acts.<sup>11</sup> As this study of the relationship between music and violence has increased, some broader theories on the subject have emerged.

In her own proposal of a social musicology of war, Morag Grant cites the work of Svanibor Pettan, and his suggestion of the basic functions of music in wartime, comprising of:

encouragement—of those fighting on the front lines and those hiding in shelters alike; provocation and sometimes humiliation directed towards those seen as enemies; and call[s] for the involvement of those not directly endangered—including fellow citizens, the Diaspora and the political and military decision-makers abroad.... Music was also considered a medium in which individuals and groups could express their perceptions of the war—on the one hand to spark the zeal for military commitment and to incite support for war efforts [...] through glorifying patriotism, heroic individuals, battles and military units; on the other to mourn over the victims and devastation.<sup>12</sup>

Grant's own model proposes three levels for analysing music in war: music at the moment of violence, music in the preparation of violence, and music in the reporting of violence. Music at the moment of violence is itself divided into three categories: music at the moment of violence (incorporating musical signals used on the battlefield), music accompanying the inflicting of violence, and music as an instrument of violence. Music in preparation of violence covers rituals and practices carried out in the run-up to battle, and can also be extended to cover ways of coping

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<sup>10</sup> For the use of music in torture, see in particular Suzanne G. Cusick, "“You are in a place that is out of this world...”: Music in the Detention Camps of the “Global War on Terror,”” *Journal of the Society for American Music*, Vol.2, No.1, 2008, pp.1-26; see also Jonathan Pieslak, *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009, pp.90-99. For a survey of the way acoustic technologies have been employed as “non-lethal” weapons, see Nick Lewer and Neil Davison, ‘Non-lethal technologies: An Overview’, *Disarmament Forum*, 2005, pp. 37-51, particularly pp.41-42. To a lesser extent, the use of classical music in public places to reduce antisocial behaviour (Eric Clarke, Nicola Dibben and Stephanie Pitts, *Music and Mind in Everyday Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.111) might also be seen as a weaponisation of music, with music used to drive away undesirable groups.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the essays in two edited collections in particular: John Morgan O’Connell and Salwa Castelo-Branco (eds.), *Music and Conflict*, Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2010; Susan Fast and Kip Pegley (eds.), *Music, Politics, and Violence*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Svanibor Pettan, ‘Music, politics, and the war in Croatia in the 1990s: An introduction’, in Pettan (ed.), *Music, politics and war: The view from Croatia*, Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, 2008, cited in Morag Grant, ‘Towards a Social Musicology of War’, *Music, Oppression and Resistance*, University of Amsterdam, 3 Mar 2012.



with violence's aftermath. Music and the reporting of violence is a much broader category, and can involve combatants and non-combatants alike, using music in a variety of ways to transmit and create knowledge of violent events, and, significantly, distanced from the moment of violence, either temporally or geographically.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, Pettan's and Grant's models have something to offer in understanding the relationship between music and violence, although their specific focus on war does not incorporate the full extent of the significance of violence in extreme-right music.

In a more general discussion of the relationship between popular music and violence, Johnson and Cloonan propose four categories in the central chapters of their discussion of the topic: (1) music accompanying violence; (2) music and incitement to violence; (3) music and arousal to violence; and (4) music as violence.<sup>14</sup> The second and third categories are distinct as:

incitement is in the music, and arousal is in the listener.... In a way that the varieties of musical taste make obvious, music may incite, but fail to arouse a particular audience. It may also not seek to arouse violence, yet become complicit in it.<sup>15</sup>

The way Johnson and Cloonan consider music *as* violence—as a tool to cause disorientation, humiliation and pain—is not generally applicable to the use of music by the extreme right, being generally restricted to states and factions engaged in outright hostilities,<sup>16</sup> and is not considered further here. Otherwise, this chapter will demonstrate the relationship between music and violence in the ways these scholars have suggested, particularly as a mode to glorify and encourage sacrifice, to incite and accompany violence, and as a tool in the preparation of violence.

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<sup>13</sup> Grant, 'Towards a Social Musicology of War'.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.94.

<sup>16</sup> For example, the United States army using loud rock music in their operation to capture the Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, and the use of music for torture in camps run by the United States army (Cusick, "You are in a place that is out of this world...").

While I am drawing on these models in the following discussion, they have primarily been concerned with instances of music's association with actual acts of violence and conflicts, therefore neglecting an important aspect of music's relationship with violence: the significance of music in violent rhetoric, in which *no act of violence is committed*.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, threats of violence without fulfilment can be incorporated within "music and incitement to violence," but this inclusion does not account for a topic discussed in some detail below: revenge fantasies. Extreme-right revenge fantasies typically describe a time to come when enemies and Others will face reprisal from the white population, after which a pure state can exist. These revenge fantasies do not *necessarily* incite violence (although some clearly have that intention); rather, they use violence as a purging framework, after which a better world will be established. Therefore, I propose an additional category to the models above: Music to imagine violence.

The rest of this chapter explores the various ways in which music and violence intertwine in the extreme right and the associated music scene, and the specific construction of masculine identity which results. It begins with an examination of the importance of violence to extreme-right masculine identity—particularly the portrayal of supporters as warriors—and the way in which this identity is maintained and privileged, before turning to the extreme-right archetype, the skinhead, and its reputation for violence. Also crucial here is the rejection, or at least the underplaying, of sexual activity, with sex rarely mentioned from a positive perspective. This contrasts greatly with an obsession with perceived sexual perversion or deviance; partly this is predicated upon policing group identity and maintaining heterosexuality (explored below in the context of the skinhead), and on providing a target group upon which to focus hostilities.

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<sup>17</sup> In Grant's model, music and the reporting of violence has the potential to account for this feature, but it is not her focus.

Overwhelmingly, extreme-right portrayals of masculinity emphasise militancy and physical capability. Political activism is constantly characterised as a “fight” and supporters as warriors, in both metaphorical and literal senses. These warriors are seen as crucial in safeguarding the future of the race and cause, both aggressively, in taking the fight to enemies and Others, and protectively, in guarding against attacks. The centrality of the warrior reveals much about the ideal of extreme-right masculinity and its component characteristics, most obviously the conflation of masculinity with violence and power.

We're tired of all the weaklings and the move to feminine;  
We size them up with a rifle butt right between the eyes;  
We learned our conflict resolution the old fashioned way;  
Step out back, we'll show you how just like the olden days;  
[chorus]  
Violence is in style, violence;  
Violence is in style, violence;  
Violence is in style, violence;  
Violence, it's a way of life.  
We have no time for weak sisters with their limping wrists;  
We're walking tall, swaggering and standing when we piss;  
We take the measure of a man by how he shoots, fights or fucks;  
Not by how many deals he made at his fucking power lunch.

<sup>18</sup> Feminisation of white men is often depicted as the result of Jewish influence; cf. Jessie Daniels, *White Lies: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in White Supremacist Discourse*, New York & London: Routledge, 1997, pp.112-113.

particularly homophobia and nostalgia for a mythic golden past. There is also, in the judgement of masculinity as contingent on the type of work a man does, a rejection of financial success as a measure of masculinity. This belief is crucial in justifying economic insecurity to supporters of the extreme right, an ideology which so often attracts those from the socioeconomic margins.<sup>19</sup>

Interestingly, despite all the attacks on homosexuality, there is very little reference in extreme-right music to heterosexuality. This may be due to an unspoken understanding of the appropriate form of sexual desire, a belief in gentlemanly restraint, or the widespread opinion that extreme-right music should not address themes and subjects which are generally the domain of degenerate mainstream popular music (in this case love and sex).

But while extreme-right music does not address heterosexual sex in a significant way, the belief in the beauty of white women is a core tenet. While this beauty is obviously politicised, it is also generally subject to appreciation rather than the stimulation of sexual desire. For instance, in Skrewdriver's 'The Warrior's Song' (*Warlord*, Rock-O-Rama, 1989), women's beauty is toasted in the context of what men are fighting for, simultaneously emphasising the warrior characteristics that define the extreme-right male:

Let's drink to our mighty warriors;  
Let's drink to the northern winds;  
Let's drink to our women's beauty;  
Let's drink before the war begins.

The invocation to drink to worthy subjects highlights the importance of alcohol to extreme-right culture. For instance, a former British neo-Nazi recounts in detail his recollections of involvement in the "permanently pissed"<sup>20</sup> British extreme right. Even professionalised branches of the extreme right have to contend with the inebriation of their colleagues; for example, a meeting organised by the highly professional Swedish extreme right was marred by the drunken state of their

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<sup>19</sup> Economic marginalisation is also depicted as the result of a grand Jewish conspiracy against the white race, an idea explored in Chapter Two.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Collins, *Hate: My Life in the British Far Right*, London: Biteback Publishing, 2011, xiv.

Norwegian counterparts.<sup>21</sup> But while alcohol is one of the few luxuries permitted by the extreme-right conception of masculinity, as an identity it is dominated by fixation on violence and hostility towards perceived sexual deviance.

Violence is not only employed in reaction to homosexuality (see below), but permeates extreme-right attitudes to sex in general. Indeed, violence can act as a surrogate for sex: one skinhead is quoted in Moore's *Skinheads Shaved for Battle*, "the violence is better than sex."<sup>22</sup> Moore, not a model of objectivity, also states that, for skinheads, "Bludgeoning inferiors and competitive predators is their main business, quick, uninvolved sex a momentary leisure to chuckle over with the other Neanderthals about the fire."<sup>23</sup> This appraisal is mirrored by a summary, in a biography of Ian Stuart Donaldson, of the skinhead protagonist of James Moffatt's novels (written under the pseudonym Richard Allen):

He went to Brighton and kicked in some hippies with his boots. Then he fucked some bird and got dressed again: clip-on braces, new Doc Martens and skintight Levi's so that his boots could be seen in all their savage glory. In Joe Hawkin's [sic.] world, women existed only for their tits (which usually jiggled). Men existed only to have their heads crushed in (by boots, with aggro) or to do the crushing.<sup>24</sup>

Allen's books, which also contain scenes of rape, are said (by another extreme-right source) to have sold thousands and played a huge part in promoting the skinhead cult by providing a "youth-bible."<sup>25</sup> Homophobia may not play a pivotal role in these works, but they emphasise a skinhead masculinity predicated upon violence and abuse of female characters who are reduced to sexual objects.

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<sup>21</sup> Jorn Madslie, 'Norway's far right not a spent force', *BBC News*, 23 Jul 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14260195>, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Jack B. Moore, *Skinheads Shaved for Battle: A Cultural History of American Skinheads*, Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993, p.173.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.172-173.

<sup>24</sup> *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004, Chapter I.

<sup>25</sup> 'The Ian Stuart Donaldson & Skrewdriver Biography', *Blood & Honour Nederland*, n.d., [http://www.bloodhonournederland.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4%3Athe-ian-stuart-donaldson-a-skrewdriver-biography&catid=9%3Aian-stuart&Itemid=12&lang=en](http://www.bloodhonournederland.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4%3Athe-ian-stuart-donaldson-a-skrewdriver-biography&catid=9%3Aian-stuart&Itemid=12&lang=en), accessed 16 May 2013.

The lack of sexual content in extreme-right music—from a positive perspective, at least—is in part because of a belief that it is of secondary importance to other themes. Mark Hamm states that “white power” rock bands “transmit only images of masculinity, neo-Nazism, and violence. White power rock is a music of carnal morality—without sex and without other pleasures of the human condition.”<sup>26</sup> This perspective means that asserting one’s masculinity is not achieved through sexual means, but rather through asserting one’s physical strength. This identity construction is mostly found in genres associated with “white power” and neo-Nazi music, which construct a particular form of masculine identity through warrior archetypes. However, masculinity is not constructed solely through ideologies of maleness, with the stipulation of specific feminine roles also significant.

### **Maintaining the Masculine Norms of the Extreme-Right**

Sexuality and gender<sup>27</sup> are key issues for extreme-right movements, which generally see themselves as standing up to what they consider to be sexual deviancy, and as representatives of a more moral outlook than the rest of society. Unsurprisingly, the strong views on sexuality lead to consequent expectations of the roles that the genders are expected to conform to, with particularly strict expectations placed upon women. The following examples make clear that these constructions are designed to appeal to the frustrations of white men, and to explain their marginalisation in a way that does not undermine their masculinity.

It is unsurprising that the extreme right is so male-focused. While there is significant female support for extreme-right groups, there is no doubt that it is still an ideology characterised by patriarchy and masculinity, something which is reflected in membership demographics; a number of studies (cited above) have noted the

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<sup>26</sup> Mark Hamm, *American Skinheads: The Criminology and Control of Hate Crime*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993, p.193.

<sup>27</sup> Here, I take *gender* to mean the social construct and expectations traditionally defined by notions of femininity and masculinity, distinct from biological differences often referred to by the term *sex*; I define *sexuality* as the categorisation of sexual attraction, conventionally into the groupings heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual.

consistency of extreme-right supporters across nations being predominantly male. This imbalance is mirrored in gender representation in extreme-right music; female musicians remain an absolute minority, and despite the various constructions of female gender and sexuality, the appearance of women in song lyrics and subject matter is relatively rare. It is far more common to find songs from a first-person perspective (with the overwhelming majority of singers being male), addressed in the second-person (usually clearly intended as men singing to men), or about a third-person “he.”

The gender imbalance of extreme-right music is reflected in the reception of feminism, which is seen as the gender equivalent of anti-racism, in that it is thought to be forcing equality on unequal relationships—in this case between men and women—and in so doing discriminating against the inherent superiority of the white male. Feminists are thus cast as “Feminazis” whose campaigning for equal rights must result in the oppression of white men.<sup>28</sup> There is also a sense that feminism, as well as corrupting gender roles that are deemed to be natural, places the loyalty of women to their gender, rather than to their race.<sup>29</sup> Feminism is therefore deemed to be a significant contributory factor to the decline of whiteness.

The way that feminism is perceived to have altered courtship is outlined by David Lane: “The male is meant to capture females, not beg for their favor like some whipped spaniel. In our now alien-occupied countries a man ‘woos’ a woman with promises of material goods, with \$60 or \$100 bouquets of flowers; he is an emasculated idiot.”<sup>30</sup> While this situation would seem to favour the female, Lane asserts that women are disadvantaged by this state of affairs as well:

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<sup>28</sup> Abby Ferber, ‘Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors: The Construction of Masculinity in Mythopoetic and White Supremacist Discourse’, *Men and Masculinities* Vol.3 No.1 Jul 2000, pp. 30-56; Kimmel and Ferber, “‘White Men Are This Nation’”.

<sup>29</sup> In some versions, this is a result of Jewish influence; just as Jewish men are believed to hold power in economics and governments, Jewish women are seen as the instigators of feminism, through which they are attempting to divide the white race. Cf. Daniels, *White Lies*, pp.119-121.

<sup>30</sup> David Lane, ‘Sex and Women’, in *Collection of Works of David Lane*, n.d., p.232.

By conditioning and false intellectualization the modern woman convinces herself she should “own” one man, rather than be the possession of a superior man. But the fire fades. The spark dies. Her orgasms are weak and faked. Because once a man is “tamed,” the natural attraction is gone. He is now her working drone, she no longer needs to compete with other women. In her heart of hearts she despises “her man,” while her innermost being longs to be taken by a dominant male.... Her instincts are denied.<sup>31</sup>

In another essay, Lane returns to the theme of sexual relations as sexual subjugation:

Females in nature do not have a choice. They are programmed by nature to accept the conquering male and thus the superior genes are passed along, ensuring the strength and survival of the specie. The superior male takes all the females he can capture and defend. Among humans, the superior males take also the most attractive females, and thus their beauty unites with virility for higher life.<sup>32</sup>

This tacit endorsement of rape is not exceptional, but seen as a natural consequence of natural power relations between the genders. A notorious example of this surfaced when a BNP candidate for the London Assembly wrote about the “myth” of rape on his blog:

Rape is simply sex. Women enjoy sex, so rape cannot be such a terrible physical ordeal. To suggest that rape, when conducted without violence, is a serious crime is like suggesting that forcefeeding a woman chocolate cake is a heinous offence. A woman would be more inconvenienced by having her handbag snatched. The demonisation of rape is all part of the feminazi desire to obtain power and mastery over men. Men who go along with the rape myth are either morons or traitors.<sup>33</sup>

It would be wrong to suggest that approval of rape is uniform across the extreme right—this candidate was removed by the BNP when his comments were revealed in the press—but clearly the belief in a natural inequality between the sexes, and the belief in the subjugation of men by feminism, is seen to be detracting from the natural order of sexual conduct, specifically the mastery of men.

It should be emphasised that women who are part of groups with strong views on gender and sexuality do not necessarily subscribe wholeheartedly to this ideology. For instance, Kathleen Blee’s interviews with women members of extreme right

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.233.

<sup>32</sup> David Lane, ‘Sex and Women’, pp.312.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Gilligan, ‘Women more troubled by bag theft than rape, BNP candidate claims’, *Evening Standard*, 1 Apr 2008, <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/mayor/women-more-troubled-by-bag-theft-than-rape-bnp-candidate-claims-6655808.html>, accessed 23 Jan 2013.



groups reveal opinions at odds with seemingly central tenets of extreme-right belief, such as a Klanswoman, a member of a group with a strong anti-abortion stance,<sup>34</sup> who confessed: “Oh, Lord. I have to tell you, I had one [an abortion] myself. I think it’s a perfectly private thing.... It should never be part of a political platform. Not an issue out in public.”<sup>35</sup> Women are far from unthinking members of extreme-right groups, and are actively striving to have their voice heard and to improve the status of women within the movement, thereby hoping to appeal to more potential female recruits. That said, Kathleen Blee argues that while men and women are to an extent remade in a “racist mould” when they join extreme-right groups, the self-interest of men is much closer to the goals of the groups in question than the self-interest of women, thereby necessitating the greater sacrifice of women’s interests in order to conform to the group ideology.<sup>36</sup>

The roles to which women are expected to conform are clearly evident in the depiction and reception of women in extreme-right music. A primary portrayal of women is as sexual objects, rather at odds with the lack of sex from extreme-right discourse. For instance, when *Resistance* used women on its covers (see Fig. 1), they were generally presented in sexually provocative poses. Occasionally they were models with no connection to the issues content; female musicians were presented in similar poses. One issue featured the bassist of Blood Eagle in various poses, without her bandmates.<sup>37</sup> Also notable in this regard are the central pages of each issue of *Resistance*; the magazine usually had a few colour pages per issue, some of which were always reserved for a spread of ‘Proud Aryan Women,’ images apparently submitted by readers. While these photographs were not always sexually suggestive,

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<sup>34</sup> Extreme-right groups are commonly against abortion in the case of white children, with some advocating the sterilisation of other ethnic groups, viewing reproduction as a crucial battleground in their racial struggle.

<sup>35</sup> Kathleen M. Blee, *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, p.100.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>37</sup> *Resistance*, Iss.23 Fall 2004.



*Fig. 1: Women on the cover of Resistance Magazine, Issues 17 (Winter 2002), 25 (Winter 2005/6) and 26 (Summer 2006).*

occasionally featuring children and older women, it was clearly intended to present images of the beauty and desirability of the white race—symbolised by these women—in order to motivate for the cause. Two reasons for this sexual depiction of women are frequently cited by the extreme right: first, that it is a result of the superior physical attractiveness of white women; and second, that sexual imagery is a useful propagandistic tool to attract men to the cause.

Saga, perhaps the most popular female extreme-right musician, is often represented and discussed in sexual terms. Chapter Seven shows how Saga represents a “softer” image, but this “sexiness” is also very much valued, as the following selection of fan posts demonstrates:

Maybe it seems like a real weard [sic] thing to say, but saga is jus’t [sic] a real beautifull [sic] MILF.<sup>38</sup>

[A female poster writes] I love her. Some of my friends hate her voice, but I think that is because their husbands LOVE her.... My gawd she's prettier than the pics of her on his [sic] C.D.'s, sexie [sic] lady with a smooth voice.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> ‘My own little tribute to Saga’, *Stormfront*, created 9 Mar 2007, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/370668/>, accessed 5 Jan 2013. “MILF” is an abbreviation of the phrase “Mother I’d Like to Fuck.” The use of this terminology attracted hostility from other contributors, who didn’t think it suitable language to use to describe a white woman.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Saga’, *Tightrope*, created 1 Nov 2012, <http://www.tightropeforum.com/showthread.php?6183-Saga>, accessed 5 Jan 2013.

Saga is a goddess and the best argument yet for cloning!<sup>40</sup>  
What a beautiful woman and songs.... She's so beautiful even live!<sup>41</sup>

Saga is aware of, and caters to, this fanbase; her album *On My Own* (Midgård Records, 2007) included a glossy pullout poster of Saga in various poses, with the accompanying message: "With love, Saga xxx." It is hard to disentangle appreciation of Saga's music from appreciation of her as a woman (fans often mention both factors), but there can be little doubt that Saga's success has been helped by her image and marketing strategy.

The rarity of female musicians in the extreme-right scene, however, means that female representations are just as often created by men. The female version of the skinhead, the skingirl, de-emphasises conventional femininity: hairstyles, such as the so-called "Chelsea cut," incorporate shaved sections with longer hair; clothing fashion is mostly the same as for men; while skingirl culture also allows women to participate alongside men in the violent rituals of the mosh-pit.<sup>42</sup> The representation of skingirls includes these aspects, but also emphasises the female status as sexual object. Project Vandal's *Our Cult* (TB Records, 2007) does this through an illustration of a skingirl with large breasts in tight clothing.<sup>43</sup> Ortel's *Pro Vás A Vaše Ženy!* ("For You And Your Wife!", Iron Sword Records, 2006) is even less subtle; it shows a skingirl with the appropriate uniform of partially shaven head, braces and tattoos, and also armed with both a knife and a gun (see Fig. 2). However, the woman, apart from the braces passing over her exaggerated breasts, is topless, therefore embodying a strange combination of the threat of violence and sexual allure.

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<sup>40</sup> 'Letters to the Editor', *Resistance*, Iss.14 Winter 2001, p.63.

<sup>41</sup> 'Saga the singer', *White News Now*, created 2 Nov 2012, <http://www.whitenewsnow.com/arts-movies-literature-all-arts/34990-saga-singer.html>, accessed 5 Jan 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, p.182.

<sup>43</sup> The cover of the Swedish compilation *Nordland III* (Midgård Records, 2000) is similar in its depiction of a woman with large breasts (albeit not a skingirl) in a kind of uniform, which does not overly mask the body underneath.



Fig. 2: Cover of Ortel's album *Pro Vás A Vaše Ženy!*, Iron Sword Records, 2006.

It should be noted that some of these covers, and many others, also show men with prominent and exaggerated musculature, and therefore similarly objectified. However, there is evidence that the “ideal type” represented in these illustrations places more pressure on women than on men; there is no shortage of men featured on album covers and other media who do not look anything like this ideal type.<sup>44</sup> It also appears that—other than in cases such as Saga’s where the musician’s sexuality and appearance are greatly valued by fans—other women are reluctant to appear on covers, unless they are representing another facet of womanhood, such as innocence or motherhood: for example the covers of Kara’s *Under a Fading Moon* (Brotherhood Records, 2007) and Froidenspender’s self-titled album (self-released, 1999) use illustrations rather than pictures of the musicians themselves. However, these illustrations may be intended to allow the musician anonymity,<sup>45</sup> or, in the

<sup>44</sup> This gendered depiction of musicians, of course, reflects the norms of the mainstream music industry.

<sup>45</sup> Kara (a pseudonym) is an example of an extreme-right musician working anonymously. Cf. “Kara” speaks from under a Fading Moon’, *Blood & Honour* (UK), n.d. (2005?), No.31, p.3.

cases where musicians are pictured elsewhere in album or promotional material, to allow them to assert ideological principle and to distance themselves from any notion of self-promotion.

As well as being sexually objectified, women are valued for their role as mothers, seen not only as responsible for bearing the next generation of white children, but also responsible for ensuring that they are raised in an appropriate and racially-aware manner. The extreme-right conception of motherhood is hierarchical, with women designated a role in the home as part of a family unit, but it also reveals hostility towards miscegenation through its assertion of the racially pure family unit.

Musical examples of positive mothering role-models are relatively rare; one musician who has cultivated an image of a good wife and mother is the German balladeer Annett Müller, née Moeck, known commonly by her first name. Annett herself avows this when considering the question of female musicians in the extreme-right scene: “Whether male or female, is not really all that important, but rather what he or she want to express... [which] in my writing [is] maternal care and sensitivity toward the children.”<sup>46</sup>

At times, Annett’s music focuses on the everyday workings of the home and a mother’s life, as in ‘Alltagsleben einer Mutter’ (*Eine Mutter klagt an*, Pühses Liste, 2000):

At half five the alarm clock startles you, and a new day unfolds;  
Prepare the coffee, and there is no bread, quickly run to the baker;  
Cook the eggs, butter the sandwiches, and check the homework of the boys;  
...  
Being mummy is difficult, on some days very much so.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> “Ob weiblich oder männlich, ist eigentlich gar nicht so wichtig, sondern was der- oder diejenige aussagen will ... in meinen Texten ... mütterliche Fürsorge und Feinfühligkeit den Kindern gegenüber.” Quoted in Kirsten Döhring and Renate Feldmann, ‘Frauen(bilder) in rechten Subkulturen: Ich weiß genau was ich will, halt nicht die Schnauze und bin still...’, in Christian Dornbusch and Jan Raabe (eds.). *RechtsRock: Bestandsaufnahme und Gegenstrategien*. Hamburg/Münster: reihe antifaschistischer texte/UNRAST-Verlag, 2002, p.189.

<sup>47</sup> “Halb sechs schreckt dich der Wecker auf, und ein neuer Tag nimmt seinen Lauf; Kaffeewasser angesetzt, und kein Brot, mal schnell zum Bäcker gewetzt; Eier kochen, Stullen schmieren, und die Hausaufgaben des Jungen kontrollieren; ... Mama sein ist schwer - an manchen Tagen wirklich sehr.”

Annett's work has seen her become a relative star of the extreme-right scene in Germany, and it is likely that this is in part due to her portrayal of another facet of white life which, in its purity and innocence, requires protection.

On the other side of the coin from the approval of the traditional family unit is hostility towards procreation outside of one's own people, with miscegenation (almost always concerning white women and non-white men) a common theme of revenge fantasies (see below). The theme is common for many extreme-right bands, but is a particular concern for Angry Aryans, as in 'Race Mixing is Treason' (*Racially Motivated Violence*, Tri-State Terror, 1999):

I walk down the street, I see them hand in hand;  
This stupid white bitch, with a colored man;  
Their repulsive act of nature really makes me sick;  
How these white bimbos get off sucking nigger dick;  
Race mixing is treason.

Omnipresent is the threat—often promise—of punishment and revenge for this betrayal. It is interesting to note that during my research I have found no examples of women singing about miscegenation, and no songs addressing any betrayal on the part of men. This might be due to the relative lack of women in the extreme-right music scene (although there are enough to form a sample) and the fact that white male miscegenation is seen as insignificant in comparison to that of white females. This suggests that in matters of gender and sexuality, the extreme right is particularly geared towards the interests of men and a particular sort of masculinity. Through the reduction of women to specific roles—that of sexual objects, passive idealised mothers or race traitors—the extreme right, and particularly the music scene, creates a space which privileges a specific notion of masculinity, a space in which violence plays a variety of significant roles.

### **Masculine Identity: The skinhead**

The archetypal image of the post-1980s extreme-right supporter has almost always been the skinhead. Skinheads were described by Dave Mazzella (a senior figure in White Aryan Resistance in the late 1980s) as "our front line warriors... [who] roam

the streets and do what's necessary to protect the race."<sup>48</sup> This role is physical, with skinheads notorious in many countries for their association with violent hate crimes, but also highly symbolic. As discussed in the next chapter, the skinhead image takes on the role of the modern incarnation of the warrior throughout history, the latest in a line including Viking warriors, crusaders, and Waffen-SS soldiers. This warrior status is not automatic, but is rather something which has been cultivated and maintained.

According to George Marshall, "by the close of '69 a definite [skinhead] uniform had developed.... The idea was to look hard and smart."<sup>49</sup> The language used here is not an accident; the idea of "uniform" recurs throughout descriptions of the skinhead subculture, as does violence:

Skinhead gear represented the ultimate gang uniform. It was stylised hardness and blatantly working class. Being part of a gang gave a tremendous feeling of belonging and from it stemmed the pride, respect and loyalty you had for your mates and our gang's reputation.... The gang's hardcore was always made up of those who were always looking for a fight and those who were good at it. A boot squad who went in first and came out best.<sup>50</sup>

This uniform was not merely imposing, but practical; indeed, due to the prevalence of skinhead violence at football matches, the police banned steel-toe-capped boots from football grounds as an offensive weapon, leading to the rise in popularity in Doc Martens, which were also employed as an effective weapon.

This image was matched by the skinheads' reputation, garnered at gigs, football matches and beaches on bank holidays. While the original skinheads were notorious for "Paki-bashing," there were many other targets for skinhead aggression, particularly other style subcultures such as hippies, teds, mods and greasers, Marshall revealing that: "Queers and anyone who looked remotely like one were usually easy and regular targets in most areas, especially when there was one of them and ten little aggro merchants eager to wade in."<sup>51</sup> Clearly, skinhead life—with its emphasis on

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<sup>48</sup> Moore, *Skinheads Shaved for Battle*, p.9.

<sup>49</sup> George Marshall, *Spirit of '69: A Skinhead Bible* [1991], 2nd edition, Dunoon: S.T. Publishing, 1994, pp.14-15.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.34-5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

masculinity and the homogenisation of boys and men into gangs—was homosocial, with “queer-bashing” employed to disavow any association with homosexuality. That said, this targeting may have been based on looks alone: Murray Healy’s interviewees suggest that homosexuals were accepted into the first skinhead gangs of the 1960s,<sup>52</sup> although these examples may be exceptional rather than typical.

Healy also suggests that the practice of “Paki-bashing” itself is based on gender rather than racial lines. Certainly, there are those who deny the racial aspect, such as the observer in 1970 who rather simplistically claimed that one gang had some “coloured people, giving lie to the suggestion that their paki-bashing [was] sparked purely by racial hatred.”<sup>53</sup> Healy suggests that the targeting of Asians was a result of the gendering of race. White youths, whose whiteness was the norm and therefore unmarked, looked to the black culture of Rude Boys as an example of hypermasculinity; in contrast, Asian focus on study and family was regarded as feminine.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, black culture was respected and emulated (although clashes did occur), while Asians were targeted, and seen as easy targets at that, particularly due to their perceived lack of masculinity. Of course, the judgement of a person’s gender qualities based on their race is still racism, but it does suggest that masculinity was the prime concern of the first wave of skinheads.

Often, the depiction of the warrior not only asserts the most valued aspects of masculinity, but simultaneously reveals the frustrations which drive many on the extreme right. The skinhead revival of the late 1970s, and the annexation of the subculture by the National Front, saw racism and homophobia becoming core components of skinhead ideology. In part, this was based on the increasing visibility of ethnic minorities and gay-rights activists in society; similarly, the assertion of

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<sup>52</sup> Murray Healy, *Gay Skins: Class, Masculinity and Queer Appropriation*, London: Cassell, 1996, pp. 64-69.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Marshall, *Spirit of '69*, p.40.

<sup>54</sup> Healy, *Gay Skins*, pp.43-45. Similar arguments have been made about whites identifying with the depictions of black masculinity in hip-hop (Mark Anthony Neal, ‘White Chocolate Soul: Teena Marie and Lewis Taylor, *Popular Music*, Vol.24 No.3 2005, p.370).



women having a natural place in the home was a reaction to feminism and the increased competition in the job market. The very characteristics valued as central to masculinity—particularly physical strength—were no longer as important, leading to a sense of oppression and marginalisation on the part of white working-class men.

### **Keeping the Skinhead Straight**

The second-wave of skinhead subculture—roughly coinciding with the introduction of punk in the late 1970s—altered the original style in some ways, but the most significant change—particularly in the context of this thesis—was the integration and association of the skinheads with organised extreme-right politics. It was at this time that homophobia became a militant and active component of skinhead life, in contrast to earlier ambivalence and even acceptance; indeed, it has been said that the period between the decline of the first skinhead cult and its revival “was a great time when virtually all the skinheads you used to see were gay.”<sup>55</sup> The ultra-masculine reputation of the skinhead had proved exceptionally popular with gay men, particularly in Britain, where “the skinhead represented the most potent representation of real masculinity available.”<sup>56</sup> Not only did the skinhead style become popular among gay men, it was adopted as an object of gay desire, particularly through its employment in pornography.

This association of the skinhead style with homosexuality not only troubled the extreme right, but perplexed mainstream perceptions and stereotypes. Healy cites the difficulty many people have in reconciling the image of the skinhead—the ultra-masculine, working class “real man”—with the stereotype of gay men as effeminate, middle class weaklings; in this view, “gay” and “skinhead” ought to constitute opposite ends of the masculine scale.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, homosexuality is generally associated with liberal politics, and therefore removed from extreme-right ideology.

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<sup>55</sup> Healy, *Gay Skins*, p.85.

<sup>56</sup> Healy, *Gay Skins*, p.9.

<sup>57</sup> Healy, *Gay Skins*, p.4.

But, as Healy shows, gay men fetishised masculinity, while the following examples demonstrate that homosexuality is by no means in automatic contradiction with extreme-right politics.

The most famous “outing” of a prominent figure associated with the extreme-right music scene was that of Nicky Crane. Crane was a prominent member of the British Movement and had served as a roadie for Skrewdriver, also contributing lyrics and cover illustrations for the band.<sup>58</sup> He was the face of the influential *Strength Thru Oi!* album (Decca, 1981, Fig. 3), an ostensibly non-racist mainstream release which garnered controversy with its Nazi-referencing title and the image of Crane, albeit with his nationalist tattoos airbrushed out.<sup>59</sup> Crane would, with Ian Stuart Donaldson, act as co-founder of Blood & Honour in 1987, also taking on the role of head of security.



Fig. 3: *Strength Thru Oi!* album cover, Decca, 1981.

Throughout this period, Crane effectively led a double life, being a familiar face on the gay skin scene and even starring in some gay porn videos in the mid-1980s.<sup>60</sup> Crane’s politics were common knowledge on the gay scene, but it was

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<sup>58</sup> Diamond *In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004.

<sup>59</sup> Gary Bushell, ‘The Story of Oi!’, *Gary Bushell—Online*, 2009, <http://www.garry-bushell.co.uk/features.htm>, accessed 1 Feb 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Healy, *Gay Skins*, p.134.

on the Channel 4 documentary *Out* in 1992 that Crane outed himself. The reaction of Ian Stuart Donaldson reveals the shock and disgust this revelation provoked on the extreme right:

I feel more betrayed by him than probably anybody else, because he was the head of our security. I actually used to stick up for him when people used to say that he was queer, because he convinced me that he wasn't. I always used to ask him why he worked at these gay clubs, telling him that he'd get a bad name. He used to say that it was the security firm that he used to work with, that they used to give him the job there. I accepted him at face value, as he was a Nationalist. I was fooled the same as everybody else. Perhaps more than everybody else. I felt I was betrayed by him and I want nothing to do with him whatsoever. He's dug his own grave as far as I'm concerned.<sup>61</sup>

Nicky Crane subsequently left the British Movement, unable to reconcile his sexuality with his politics, before dying of AIDS in 1993, but there are examples of those who have attempted to have their sexuality recognised and accepted by the extreme right.

As early as 1974, a group in California, the National Socialist League, was formed specifically to accommodate gay neo-Nazis. The group argued against the splits within the white race while "racial enemies advance on all sides," and declared it would fight separately until sexual preference was accepted.<sup>62</sup> The League lasted until the mid-1980s before ceasing operations. More recently, the Internet has allowed a number of extreme-right gay-oriented websites to reach an audience, such as the Gay Racist Network and Gays Against Semitism, while chatrooms cater to such diverse topics as "Gay Nazi Sex," "Nazi Muscle," "Gay Nazi White Power Fetishists" and "Gay Aryan Neo-Nazi Skinheads."<sup>63</sup>

These groups have done little to temper the extreme homophobia of the mainstream extreme right, as shown by a recent forum on *Stormfront* initiated by a poster who argued: "A homosexual isn't less white than anyone else here. They did

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted in *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004, VIII.

<sup>62</sup> Martin Durham, *White Rage: The extreme right and American politics*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, p.23.

<sup>63</sup> SPLC, 'Gay Aryans Nations Members Are the Fringe of the Fringe', *Intelligence Report*, Fall 2000 Iss.100, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2000/fall/the-fringe-of-the-fringe>, accessed 1 Feb 2013.

not choose to be that way, yet you guys hate them.” This view was supported by another contributor, who states that “as a gay White man, I find this disappointing. I want to support the White race just like any other White individual.” Despite this eagerness to contribute, the response was overwhelmingly hostile, with responses including “Homosexuality is a defect and a mental illness and should be treated as such,” “it is unnatural, I hunted many years and never saw a male try to \*\*\*\* [sic] a male. it is sickening and only exists because some humans are perverse” and “A homosexual is a person with a dangerous mental illness. They molest children at a truly alarming rate—thirty times the rate of heterosexuals according to one of the studies. Their lifespans are shortened by decades due to their behaviors. They spread deadly diseases. They side with the enemies of our race on virtually every issue. Shall I continue?”<sup>64</sup> It is clear that homophobia remains deeply rooted in extreme-right ideology, and therefore no surprise that homosexuals are a particular target for hostility in music.

### **Music to Imagine Violence: Revenge Fantasies**

Overwhelmingly, homophobic hostility is directed towards gay men, since homosexuality is thought of almost exclusively in terms of male sexuality.<sup>65</sup> The use of homophobic language is complicated by the fact that it is commonly used to slur enemies and, perhaps more importantly, to justify schisms between groups which share the same broad ideology. A prominent example of this occurred after the split which saw the founding of Blood & Honour in the UK in 1987; this organisation’s members, having broken away from the control of the National Front, began

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<sup>64</sup> ‘Why are you guys so against homosexuality’, *Stormfront*, created 30 Dec 2012, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t935886/>, accessed 16 Jan 2013.

<sup>65</sup> An exception to this can be found with the I.N.F.A.N.T.R.Y. song ‘Lesbians are Faggots too’ (*Black to the Future*, Crazy Nig Records, 2013), but even this example demonstrates how little attention is paid to lesbianism. The song was originally included on the compilation *Smashing Rainbows: Rock Against Homosexuality* (Fetch the Rope Records, 2007) and, other than a passing reference to a “carpet muncher” in People Hater’s ‘Smear the Queer’, is the only song on the 21-track album to refer to female homosexuality.

referring to the party as the “Nutty Fairy Party.”<sup>66</sup> The extent to which this was mere name-calling varied, with those using the phrase sporadically justifying it with accusations of homosexuality against NF leaders, including, at this point, Nick Griffin. This approach seems predicated on the notion that in white supremacist belief, belonging to the white elite is not solely based on skin colour and can be denied to those who fail to meet white moral standards, as in Bound For Glory’s ‘White Country’ (*Under the Gods*, Nordland, 1994), which asserts that drug-users and homosexuals are categories which, along with immigrants, do not belong in the “white population”:

Look at the state of our land today;  
The white population has no say;  
Too many immigrants, junkies and queers;  
The rot is increasing every year;  
You’ve got to fight;  
For a white country.

At times, it is difficult to tell if language such as this is used to attack homosexuals (as in this instance) or whether all those seen to be standing in the way of a pure society are placed in a hated category. But while it can occasionally be difficult to distinguish between homophobic language used merely to express hostility or hatred and actual accusations and disapproval of homosexuality, there is an overwhelming amount of material overtly expressing the homophobic ideology of the extreme right.

As with much extreme-right music addressing core ideological subjects, hostility towards perceived sexual deviance is expressed through revenge fantasies. Grinded Nig’s ‘Torture and Humiliation’ (*Racial Mutilation*, Panzerfaust, 2004), is an extreme articulation of this hatred, albeit displaying a preoccupation with penetration and penile discharge:

Our minds set for violent intent;  
The goal to find a mutilation victim;  
See some guys leave a queer bar;  
We follow them to their fucking home;  
Two white guys and a nigger faggot;  
They watch gay porn and have some drinks;

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<sup>66</sup> For example, *Blood & Honour*, n.d. No.9, p.3; *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004, V.

Torture and Humiliation;  
We break down the door armed with knives;  
They are beaten down, tied and gagged;  
Smash the nigger's head through the TV set;  
Pull down his pants and ram a knife up his ass;  
The white queer cries from what he sees;  
I smash his jaw, then piss on his face;

...

Make the buttslammers suffer;  
Drag them out to my back yard;  
Force them to eat fresh dog shit;  
Then slice their throats, they will bleed to death;  
As the blood flows, they cry for forgiveness;  
Now this is done, dispose of the bodies;  
Go out and repeat it all again.

It is notable that Grinded Nig are the cause of some controversy, with the band considered too extreme in some quarters. For instance, one poster on the *Vanguard News Network* forum writes:

Their lyrics are fucking disgusting and they use Nazi imagery just to be as shocking as possible. People like this are setting our entire movement way back!... We just can't afford to be associated with these guys. We are supposed to be the superior Aryans, right?<sup>67</sup>

The source of this objection is not Grinded Nig's subject matter, but the graphic way in which it is presented; the problem is with the detailed graphic imagery of the band's lyrics, with violence against homosexuals—prevalent in song lyrics elsewhere—not something to be reproached.

In their 'United, White & Proud' (*Born to Hate*, Resistance Records, 1993), American band Nordic Thunder suggest that "smashing local homos" is just as important to collective group identity as "Paki-bashing" was to the original skinheads:

United, white and proud, on the attack;  
United, white and proud, gonna take our nation back;  
East coast crews are bashing the fags;  
Smashing local homos dressed up in drag;  
Northern skins getting stronger everyday;  
United, white and Proud, leading the way.

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<sup>67</sup> 'Take a stand against WP record labels that sell Grinded Nig', *Vanguard News Network*, created 29 Oct 2005, <http://vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=25117>, accessed 23 Jan 2013.

Similarly, Before God's 'Minneapolis Burns' (*Wolves Amongst the Sheep*, Subzero, 1998) has attacks on homosexuals as a crucial component in its imagination of the battle for Minneapolis:

Homo-bars packed with gays;  
Scream with anguish as they go up in flames.

While some of these revenge fantasies categorise homosexuals as merely one group among many which face extreme-right violence, homosexuals are ascribed particular defining features, seen as ridden with disease, particularly AIDS. Sometimes, this characterisation is gleeful, as in Bound For Glory's 'Freddies [sic] Dead' (*Never Again!*, Thor Records, 1997), which uses the music of Queen's 'We Will Rock You'—adapting the chorus to "AIDS will AIDS will kill you"—to mark the death of Freddie Mercury:

Freddie was an odd man, gay man;  
Sleeping with the guys;  
Knowing that he'd be doomed one day;  
He got blood on his face;  
Big disgrace;  
This dirty little faggot's been put into his place.

AIDS is also, however, perceived as a threat to the stability of whiteness; despite the widespread assertion that AIDS is a gay disease, its spread is feared and taken as justification for violent action, for example in Arresting Officers 'Defend Us In Battle' (*Land and Heritage*, Rock-O-Rama, 1990):

The spread of AIDS that's caused by gays, in the closet they should stay;  
...  
Defend us in battle from the evils that we face;  
Defend us in battle for the future of our race.

Similarly, homosexuality itself is seen as a disease, "infecting" the white race, as in Before God's 'Wretched' (*Under the Blood Banner*, B.F.G. Productions, 2000):

Wretched filth you plague these streets;  
You'll never compare to nature's elite;  
A disease that has spread far too long;  
Soon you'll be gone;  
...  
Wretched queer you think your disease is natural;  
I'll never accept you as a homosexual;  
...  
You are a mistake and there's only one solution;

Help nature eradicate you through assisted evolution;  
A deviation not meant for human creation;  
A genetic aberration;  
...  
Your life is a cesspool filled with only waste;  
AIDS will erase.

As in this example, theories of Social Darwinism, evolutionary theory and eugenics frequently arise in references to homosexuality. AIDS is seen as an act of nature, eradicating the unnatural presence of homosexuals.

Homosexuality is also equated with other forms of sexual deviance, particularly paedophilia; this can be seen in Before God's 'Wretched'. A contributing factor to the extent to which paedophilia is equated with homosexuality is evident in the frequency with which NAMBLA<sup>68</sup> is referenced in discussions. This is most prevalent in written material, but a musical example can be found in Plunder & Pillage's 'Back in the Closet,' which also fulfills other extreme-right tropes of nature, disease and violence:

I hate you and what you stand for;  
You call yourself normal;  
Yet you take it in the backdoor;  
...  
You broke the laws of nature;  
And now you're diseased;  
...  
I'm the hunter, you're the hunted;  
Run as fast as you can;  
...  
San Fran., Minneapolis and every major city;  
NAMBLA and their cohorts march for your pity.

Inevitably, homosexuals are not the only enemy who are the subjects of revenge fantasies. A host of examples exist which demonstrate other targets of revenge fantasies, particularly Jews and immigrants, as in People Hater's 'Hate Crimes' (*Love to Hate*, ISD Records, 1996):

Smash a nigger in the head, it's fun to watch him bleed;  
Throw a gook on the ground, kick 'em in the teeth;  
Torch a few synagogues, it's fun to watch them burn;  
Don't you worry, the corner store camel always gets a turn.

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<sup>68</sup> North American Man/Boy Love Association, a group which has participated in LGBT rights activities.



Similar phrases and sentiment can be found in RaHoWa's popular 'Third Reich' (*Declaration of War*, Resistance Records, 1993):

You kill all the niggers and you gas all the jews;  
Kill a gypsy and a commie too;  
You just killed a kike;  
Don't it feel right?  
Goodness gracious, Third Reich!

Revenge fantasies are thus used to put enemies in easily-identifiable groups. The particular hostility towards homosexuals allows extreme-right supporters to feel more certain in their sense of "us," while also providing categories of perceived race traitors without detracting from the overall high opinion of the white race.

### **Music to Imagine Violence: The Coming Revolution**

While revenge fantasies indulge in visions of violence directed against enemies, they also overlap with more focused prophecies of violence which foretell a coming revolution. The specifics of this revolution can vary, but it generally takes the form of a race war started by an attack on or by the white population. This war is envisaged as being total, leading either to the destruction of the white race, which is rarely acknowledged as a possibility, or the total annihilation of its enemies. This vision of the ultimate conflict is commonly referred to as "The Day of the Rope," or, to a lesser extent, "The Day of Reckoning."

The etymology of "Day of the Rope" appears to be drawn from William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*. The novel depicts a violent conflict initiated by extreme-right revolutionaries in the United States which eventually leads to global genocide, leaving the white race in possession of the planet. The novel's narrator makes clear that violent struggle is the only way to create the desired new world:

[I]t is because our new civilization will be based on an entirely different world view than the present one that it can only replace the other in a revolutionary manner. There is no way a society based on Aryan values and an Aryan outlook

can evolve peacefully from a society, which has succumbed to Jewish spiritual corruption.<sup>69</sup>

The “Day of the Rope” itself refers to the description of events following the revolutionary capture of Los Angeles:

August 1, 1993. Today has been the Day of the Rope—a grim and bloody day, but an unavoidable one.... [T]he night is filled with silent horrors; from tens of thousands of lampposts, power poles, and trees throughout this vast metropolitan area the grisly forms hang. In the lighted areas one sees them everywhere. Even the street signs at intersections have been pressed into service, and at practically every street corner I passed this evening on my way to HQ there was a dangling corpse, four at every intersection. Hanging from a single overpass only about a mile from here is a group of about 30, each with an identical placard around its neck bearing the printed legend, “I betrayed my race.” Two or three of that group had been decked out in academic robes before they were strung up, and the whole batch are apparently faculty members from the nearby UCLA campus.... The first thing I saw in the moonlight was the placard with its legend in large, block letters: “I defiled my race.” Above the placard leered the horribly bloated, purplish face of a young woman, her eyes wide open and bulging, her mouth agape.... There are many thousands of hanging female corpses like that in this city tonight, all wearing identical placards around their necks. They are the White women who were married to or living with Blacks, with Jews, or with other non-White males. There are also a number of men wearing the I-defiled-my-race placard, but the women easily outnumber them seven or eight to one.... [A]bout ninety per cent of the corpses with the I-betrayed-my-race placards are men... [and] are the politicians, the lawyers, the businessmen, the TV newscasters, the newspaper reporters and editors, the judges, the teachers, the school officials, the “civic leaders,” the bureaucrats, the preachers, and all the others who, for reasons of career or status or votes or whatever, helped promote or implement the System’s racial program. The System had already paid them their 30 pieces of silver. Today we paid them.<sup>70</sup>

The Day of the Rope is thus a revenge fantasy writ large, where the enemies of the white race, including white race traitors, are purged for their crimes. One extreme-right forum contributor compares this mythology to the Judgement Day of

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<sup>69</sup> William Pierce (as Andrew MacDonald), *The Turner Diaries* [2nd ed.], Hillsboro, W.Va.: National Vanguard Books, 1980, p.111. It is unclear if this is also Pierce’s position, as in his follow-up novel, *Hunter*, the main character does engage in acts of violence but also emphasises the need for education in order to achieve white racial supremacy. Cf. Ingrid Walker Fields, ‘White Hope: Conspiracy, Nationalism, and Revolution in *The Turner Diaries* and *Hunter*’, in Peter Knight (ed.), *Conspiracy Nation: The politics of paranoia in postwar America*, New York: New York University Press, 2002 p. 164.

<sup>70</sup> Pierce, *The Turner Diaries*, p.161.

Christianity and Götterdämmerung in Odinism, clearly noting the struggle between the just and the unjust, and the eventual triumph of the righteous.<sup>71</sup>

The phrase and idea of the Day of the Rope has since become a trope for many on the extreme right, used both as a goal invoked to maintain motivation, and as a reaction to the perceived immoral acts of non-whites and “race traitors.” Comments such as “Yet one more that will dangle from the end of a rope,”<sup>72</sup> “The Day of the Rope will, indeed, be a long one”<sup>73</sup> and “She will have one rope reserved for her on the day of the rope”<sup>74</sup> are typical of many found on postings on forums such as Stormfront, demonstrating the linking of individual revenge fantasies to a racial revolution which is perceived as inevitable.

The ubiquity of the Day of the Rope has manifested in extreme-right music, although not to the extent that might be expected. The phrase itself has been used as an album title by bands such as Ukraine’s Lut and the American Organized Resistance, and perhaps most notably by the Polish record label Strong Survive, which released at least five volumes of compilations using the phrase. One of the fullest explorations of the coming revolution can be found in People Hater’s ‘Day of the Rope’ (*Love to Hate*, ISD Records, 1996):

Day of the rope is coming soon;  
We’ll hang you by the neck you fucking coon;  
Day of the rope is coming for you;  
Especially if you’re a greedy fucking Jew;  
...  
Day of the rope for the queers;  
When we watch you choke you’ll hear us cheer;  
Day of the rope is for the gooks;  
You’ll hang right along with all the filthy fucking spooks;  
...  
We’re looking to that glorious day;

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<sup>71</sup> “‘The Day of the Rope’ Will it ever happen?”, *Vanguard News Network Forum*, 15 Mar 2004, <http://vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=2995>, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>72</sup> ‘wigger skank whore blows negro rapper on stage’, *Stormfront*, created 15 May 2013, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t966678/>, accessed 22 May 2013.

<sup>73</sup> ‘SICK SICK SICK: White families march in yoke and chains in order to apologize for slavery’, *Stormfront*, created 7 May 2013, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t965215/>, accessed 22 May 2013.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Playboy model Karissa Shannon agrees to sex tape release’, *Stormfront*, created 22 Sep 2010, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t743514/>, accessed 22 May 2013.

For generations you'll hear 'em say;  
They did a job that had to be done;  
To free our land from all the filthy scum.

The target groups of the “Day of the Rope” are essentially the same as those commonly employed in revenge fantasies, but here the use of violence is seen as a necessary step to correct racial integration and to set up a purer society. Violence here becomes a purging and purifying mechanism, not only an assertion of individual superiority, but of racial superiority.

Elsewhere, examples such as Aggravated Assault's ‘Fetch the Rope’ (*It Could Happen to You*, Resistance Records, 1993) could refer to the Day of the Rope, particularly with its call for “White future, white nation, we need it now,” but it also uses rope as a reference to the Ku Klux Klan practice of lynching. More generalised predictions of race war can be found in songs such as Sniper's ‘War is Coming’ (*War is Coming!*, Rampage Productions, 2011) but, in music lyrics at least, there is a tendency to delineate acts of violence outside of any grand project in which they might function. Whether this is a conscious decision or not, revenge fantasies are much more common than predictions of total revolution.

### **Music to accompany violence: Gigs**

Violence is not only aimed outwards by the extreme right, but also inward; one of the most obvious examples of this is the anarchic and ritualistic violence which accompanies live music.<sup>75</sup> Here, violence functions not as an expression of hostility, but as a means of establishing a masculine camaraderie. That said, gigs have also become a common site for extreme-right aggression to be loosed on opponents, not only because it gathers together willing participants in violence, but also because such gigs often attract protestors, leading to confrontation.

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<sup>75</sup> There are also numerous examples of violence and murder committed against extreme-right supporters by extreme-right groups such as the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang in the United States and the paramilitary group Combat 18 founded in Britain, but these cases are generally the result of organized crime and struggles for power rather than as an expression of ideology.

Violence at gigs is most prominently associated with the skinhead subculture, and can be traced to the skinhead revival of the 1970s. This revival was tied to the wider rise of punk, which itself has associations with violence (although the link with violence has been characterised as unfair, many punks played up to it).<sup>76</sup> The bonding of ideologies of violence and masculinity was even manifested in the dance which arose out of punk, the pogo (which would remain a fixture in Oi! and skinhead gigs), with its physicality “locked into the wider masculine manual working-class ethos with which the later strands of ‘Oi’ music would more clearly identify.”<sup>77</sup>

George Marshall’s *Skinhead Nation*, an insider’s account of the skinhead cult which views it as broadly apolitical<sup>78</sup> ties the violent character of skinheads to the “golden age” of football hooliganism in the late 1960s and 1970s, and its resurgence in the late 1970s and 1980s, periods coinciding with the rise of the skinhead subculture and its later revival.<sup>79</sup> According to Marshall:

Violence, whether it’s Rambo doing the business with a sub-machine gun on the big screen, or football fans ambushing rival fans at a train station, is all about entertainment. Violence is exciting, dangerous, frightening, exhilarating, hilarious at times—in fact everything good entertainment should be. It’s not everybody’s idea of a good night out, but neither is the opera, dog racing or bingo. It’s horses for courses, and there’s no doubting that a lot of young males get a buzz, get an adrenaline rush, get their kicks out of organised violence and the bravado and excitement that accompanies it—even if nothing happens. None of this is meant as an excuse, just some sort of explanation.<sup>80</sup>

Marshall’s linking of violence to young men looking for amusement asserts a natural link between aggression and male adolescence, and while he claims he is not trying to excuse it, his discussion of it gives the impression that it is glamorous. Even so, Marshall acknowledges the potential for skinhead violence to result in collateral

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<sup>76</sup> David Simonelli, ‘Anarchy, Pop and Violence: Punk Rock Subculture and the Rhetoric of Class, 1976-78’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol.16 No.2 2002, p.130.

<sup>77</sup> Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985, p.90-91.

<sup>78</sup> Marshall estimates, with no cited evidence, that extreme-right skinheads make up 40–60% of the skinhead population: George Marshall, *Skinhead Nation*, Lockerbie: ST Publishing, 1996, p.68.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.87.

damage, as in this description of the violence at a Madness gig in Edinburgh, as late as 1993, which begins with a tone of awe:

At the Madness gig, the Capital City Service provided another awesome display of violence that has made Hibs casuals the most feared crew in Scottish football, and one of the most notorious mobs in Britain. The fact that those involved were mainly from their younger ranks made it all the more impressive.... After the gig though, I heard that a pregnant girl had been kicked to the ground and had lost her baby as a result of the attack. Maybe violence isn't always all it's cracked up to be after all.<sup>81</sup>

Fellow concert-goers are not the only ones endangered by skinhead violence, with bands themselves vulnerable. Oi! bands were contending with violent disruption of their gigs as early as 1979<sup>82</sup>—before the genre had even been named “Oi!”—and had to address the reputation of their fans for right-wing political extremism. Some bands, particularly Skrewdriver, would eventually embrace this politics, while Sham 69 would take the different option of contributing to Rock Against Racism, with frontman Jimmy Pursey also attempting to discourage fans on an individual level. While there is some anecdotal evidence that Pursey managed to convert some racist skinheads individually,<sup>83</sup> overall, Sham 69 were dogged by a violent element in their fanbase associated with extreme-right politics. During their farewell tour concerts were frequently disrupted—and cancelled—by the violent actions of skinhead fans. With the most prominent anti-racist Oi! band forced to break up, the genre, and its skinhead following, became firmly associated with extreme-right ideology.

What particularly distinguished the violence of the skinheads from the wider aggression and violence of punk was that, with their politicisation and later absorption into the National Front, skinhead violence was given a political rationale, not only through its direction against minorities and enemies, but in its assertion of a particular type of working-class masculinity. Violence was therefore integrated into a particular strand of extreme-right ideology.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.89.

<sup>82</sup> *Searchlight*, No.52 1979, p.19.

<sup>83</sup> Cecelia Grizzard, *White Riot: The Political Ambiguities of Racism in Early British Punk Music, 1976-1981*. MA Dissertation submitted to Oxford Brookes University, 2004.

The predilection for violence among the skinhead subculture of the extreme right has been sustained; a sociological exploration of the American skinhead scene outlines how ritualised the practices of the skinhead subculture are:

Group dance rituals raise the communitarian spirit of the events. Skinheads perform a semi-choreographed, ritual boot-stomping dance that evokes power, violence, and militarism. The dance usually involves ten to twenty people stomping and rotating in a circular formation. Sometimes, one person moves to the center, crouching and stomping, circling in the opposite direction, and growling or shouting at the other skinheads. Often, the center skinhead will then run into the circled Aryans in a feigned but very physical attempt to break free. After several minutes a new skinhead moves to the center and the ritual repeats. Slam dancing in front of the stage is less choreographed, but no less ritualistic. The slam dance involves aggressive pushing and crashing and acting out moves of a mock fight as part of a violent stylistic performance. Slam dancing sometimes escalates into actual brawls between two or more Aryans, which the other dancers usually break up after a minute or two. Less frequently, the brawls spread to the larger group of dancers and can escalate out of control. To an outsider, the fights can seem like a sign of discord among Aryans, but in most instances the fighting is just another part of the ritual experience that Aryans use to distinguish themselves as violent warriors.<sup>84</sup>

I have quoted this passage at length in order to demonstrate the generally ritualistic nature of skinhead dancing, and the very fine line there is between these rituals and the outright chaos of brawling. Even when violence strays beyond the relative confines of the ritual, however, it is still an expression of group solidarity and camaraderie.

George Burdi speaks of similar violent camaraderie at concerts for his band, RaHoWa:

The concerts were crazy. Friends would beat each other up and then laugh about it afterwards, with their eyes swollen shut and their noses broken and picking their teeth up off the ground.<sup>85</sup>

The violent camaraderie of gigs among skinheads is in contrast to the intense violence which can take place between extreme-right fans and their enemies. Gigs become a natural setting for such conflicts, as they are one of the few occasions for

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<sup>84</sup> Pete Simi and Robert Futrell, *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement's Hidden Spaces of Hate*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010, pp.71-72.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Jay Allen Sanford, 'Racist Rock: Do the white thing', *San Diego Reader*, 30 Aug 2007, <http://www.sandiegoreader.com/weblogs/bands/2007/aug/30/racist-rock-do-the-white-thing/>, accessed 15 May 2013.

which large numbers of extreme-right supporters congregate in the same physical space, and are also sites for protest by local people and anti-fascist groups.

Although there are numerous examples of such violence (and its implementation by all grades of the extreme-right hierarchy), there are some which show the extent to which it can affect the movement. George Burdi, then-leader of RaHoWa and in control of Resistance Records, was imprisoned for causing actual bodily harm to a female anti-fascist protestor while leading a charge of white supremacists against protestors in 1993. Not only did this result in control of Resistance passing eventually to William Pierce, Burdi emerged from prison as an avowed anti-racist, a significant departure for the extreme-right music scene. On the other hand, violence also carries with it the threat of loss, and the extreme right are not always victorious. Prominent defeats include the “Main Event” in England in 1989, a defeat which led to infightings and schisms that would contribute to the decline of the extreme right in the UK.<sup>86</sup> However, even defeats can provide opportunities: the killing of Nordic Thunder singer Joe Rowan after a concert in 1994—by black youths when he clashed with them in a convenience store—established him as a ready-made martyr, an example to be commemorated and remembered in glowing terms.<sup>87</sup>

As well as clashes between extreme-right supporters and anti-fascists at extreme-right assemblies, there are examples of the extreme right seeking out such confrontation on other ground. InSanitee, an American band from the late 1990s, concealed the racist content of their music from promoters, leading to bookings at various non-racist events; this led to clashes and violence, resulting in seven skinhead arrests in one case. Insanitee also promoted themselves as a “high school dance band,” leading to at least one teenage riot in 1999.<sup>88</sup> Such antagonism and

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<sup>86</sup> Steve Silver, ‘Blood and Honour 1987-1992’, in Nick Lowles and Steve Silver (eds.), *White Noise: Inside the international nazi skinhead scene*, London: Searchlight, 1998, pp.15-17.

<sup>87</sup> ‘In Memory of Hammer Joe Rowan’, *Hammerskin Nation*, n.d., <http://www.hammerskins.net/joerowan/>, accessed 23 May 2013.

<sup>88</sup> Sanford, ‘Racist Rock’.



provocation can be seen in other examples where extreme-right activists seek out anti-fascist events in order to disrupt them violently. Such tactics, which are at least as old as Rock Against Racism, are still in use, as in the recent example of Russian skinheads violently disrupting an anti-fascist festival in Miass, central Russia, an action which drew approving comments from supporters of the western extreme right.<sup>89</sup>

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Not all extreme-right gigs are accompanied by violence. This is especially the case with “softer” genres, with folk concerts, for example, very unlikely to attract violence. Indeed, extreme-right supporters often point out the relative peacefulness of their events compared to the reaction to them; this was the case with the BNP’s Red White and Blue Festival in 2008, which passed off peaceably, but which saw mass protests by anti-fascist groups. The BNP was then able to characterise the anti-fascist groups as fascist because of their wish to deny the BNP freedom of expression. Indeed, the violence that occurred was instigated by the protestors, with four anti-fascists breaking into the compound in an attempt to provoke a confrontation, and ending up fighting the police.<sup>90</sup> This determination to remain peaceful and passive in the face of extreme hostility allows the BNP to present itself as persecuted and to accuse the protestors of abusing democracy.<sup>91</sup> Clearly, there are some who wish to move away from the hedonistic violence prevalent at many extreme-right gatherings.

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<sup>89</sup> ‘Russia skinheads attack music festival’, *BBC News*, 30 Aug 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11127706>, accessed 26 May 2013; ‘Nazi Skinheads attack and clear out an anti racist festival in Russia.’ *Stormfront*, created 27 May 2012, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t889857/>, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>90</sup> Andy Newman, ‘Red White and Blue Festival—BNP not welcome by locals’, *Socialist Unity*, 18 Aug 2008, <http://socialistunity.com/red-white-and-blue-festival-not-welcome-by-locals/>, accessed 22 May 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Joey Smith, ‘The Three Types of Anti-Fascist’, *Joey Smith*, 16 Nov 2009, <http://notjustaboutthemusic.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/three-types-of-anti-fascist.html>, accessed 2 Mar 2013.

## **Music to accompany violence:**

### **Acts of violence associated with extreme-right music**

On 5th August 2012, Wade Michael Page opened fire at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, killing six people before turning the gun on himself. Page, a member of the Hammerskins white supremacist group, was also a long-time participant in the white power music scene, particularly the bands End Apathy and Youngland, with links to Definite Hate, 13 Knots, Max Resist, Intimidation One, Aggressive Force, Blue Eyed Devils, Celtic Warrior and Radikahl.<sup>92</sup> Page's involvement with the extreme-right music scene was a prominent feature of media coverage of the event, and is said to have aroused the attention of many in the USA for the first time.<sup>93</sup>

The temple shootings represent probably the most publicised association between extreme-right music and a particular act of violence. Page's involvement with extreme-right music was a crucial indicator of his political convictions, but there is no evidence to suggest that music influenced his attack: violence could be a discrete expression of Page's commitment to this ideology. Music may have played a role in shaping his political outlook and activism which would later find expression through violence, but it might just as well have been an outlet for his already-formed ideology.

A more definitive example of music used by a perpetrator of violence can be found with the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 77 people during his attacks in Oslo and Utøya. Breivik's manifesto reveals particularly his use of music in preparation for violence:

I do a mental check almost every day through meditation and philosophising. I simulate/meditate while I go for a walk, playing my Ipod [sic] in my neighbourhood. This consists of a daily 40 minute walk while at the same time philosophising ideologically/performing self indoctrination and the mental simulation of the operation while listening to motivational and inspiring music. I simulate various future scenarios relating to resistance efforts, confrontations with police, future interrogation scenarios, future court appearances, future media interviews etc. or I philosophise about certain articles in the book. This

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<sup>92</sup> Kirsten Dyck, 'Race and Nation in White-Power Music', PhD Thesis, Washington State University, 2012, p.17.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

daily mental exercise or ritual keeps me fully motivated and charges my batteries. And I'm sure it can work for other people as well.<sup>94</sup>

Music clearly played a fundamental role in Breivik's ritualistic preparation, in accompanying his "meditation," and in helping him to visualise the attacks. The extent to which music played a role in his imagining of the attacks is shown by a passage in which he discusses the singing of Helene Bøksle on music from the soundtrack of the computer game *Age of Conan*:

Imagine the following; at the end of your mission, when you have completed your primary objectives—imagine fighting for your life against a pursuing pack of system protectors (or as I like to call them: armed defenders of the multiculturalist system, also referred to as the police). You try to avoid confrontation but they eventually manage to surround you. You hear this song as you push forward to annihilate one of their flanks, head shotting [sic] two of your foes in bloody fervor trying to survive. This angelic voice sings to you from the heavens, strengthening your resolve in a hopeless battle. Your last desperate thrust kills another two of your enemies. But it isn't enough as you are now completely surrounded; your time is now. This voice is all you hear as your light turns to darkness and you enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This must surely be the most glorious way to claim the honour of martyrdom in battle.<sup>95</sup>

As Breivik's citing of Bøksle suggests, he is not immersed in the music of the extreme-right scene. He cites three musicians specifically in his manifesto: Clint Mansell, a film composer; Helene Bøksle, a singer on a video game soundtrack; and Saga. Saga's racial politics were easily adapted to Breivik's Islamophobia, and it seems he found ideological confirmation in her work, while feeling part of the broader ideological community of her fan-base.

As well as being significant to the preparation of his violence, Breivik envisaged using music during the attack itself:

I will put my iPod on max volume as a tool to suppress fear if needed. I might just put *Lux Aeterna* by Clint Mansell on repeat as it is an incredibly powerful song. The combination of these factors (when added on top of intense training, simulation, superior armour and weaponry) basically turns you into an extremely focused and deadly force, a one-man-army.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Anders Behring Breivik (as Andrew Berwick), 2083: *A European Declaration of Independence*, 2011, pp.845-846.

<sup>95</sup> Breivik, 2083, p.849.

<sup>96</sup> Breivik, 2083, p.1344.

Through stimulating music such as Mansell's "Lux Aeterna" he sought to imagine the detail of his attack and work on suppressing his fear, while through Bøksle and Saga's work Breivik envisaged himself as a martyr and hero, sacrificing himself for the cause he had adopted.<sup>97</sup>

While these examples have received extensive media attention, there is evidence of the role of music in "lower-level" violence as well. At its most basic, this is seen in Matthew Collins description of an attack by BNP supporters on "little old ladies" holding a meeting in a library:

And down they went, trying to curl into defensive little balls, covering their tortured faces as we screamed "BNP! BNP," stamping in time, stamping on them, kicking their heads, stamping on their bodies, dragging them off the walls and into the middle of the room so that every one of our number could feed on them.<sup>98</sup>

This use of "music" is basic: the chant provides a rhythmic pulse through which the identifying marker "BNP" is expressed, as well as directing the rhythm of the attack. The repetition of the letters "BNP" asserts a collective identity for the attackers, allowing each individual to feel part of a greater whole, while also asserting that identity to the victims. Collins goes on to say:

This was our glorious victory, our chance to be heard, our chance to speak up for the poor old white working class, the warrior race of sturdy Anglo-Saxons. We were fighting back, this was our democratic right to be heard and these cowards, these little old ladies, had to learn that we were not going to take their lies about us being brainless, racist thugs any more.<sup>99</sup>

The chant here functions as a primitive kind of battle song, coordinating the attack, asserting the identity of the attackers and engendering fear in the target.

A link has been proposed between the violent nature of extreme-right music and the violent actions of its listeners. Probably the most prominent example of this came with the trial of three young German skinheads who murdered Marius Schöberl in 2002. The trial and its reporting focused in part on the fact that the perpetrators

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<sup>97</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Breivik's musical ideology, see Joe Stroud, 'The Importance of Music to Anders Behring Breivik' *The Journal of Terrorism Research*, Vol.4 May 2013, pp.5-18, available at <http://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/jtr/article/view/620/532>.

<sup>98</sup> Collins, *Hate*, xiii. Collins provides further context of the circumstances of the attack in pp.53-56.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

had been listening to neo-Nazi music while drinking, before going to find their victim. Schöberl, a white German, was apparently chosen because he looked like a Jew, even though he was known to the attackers.<sup>100</sup> Schöberl was tortured for hours in a “cycle of violence,” before being executed by a “curb-kick” apparently copied from the film *American History X*.<sup>101</sup> The attackers apparently told the court that they felt “any victim will do,”<sup>102</sup> implying that the act was valued in itself, and also suggesting that listening to extreme-right music had instilled in the perpetrators a desire to do violence—although one could equally point to the alcohol they had consumed as an instigating factor, or challenge the relevance of both.

## Conclusion

It ought to be emphasised that the examples cited in this chapter do not represent an absolute consensus on the place of violence in extreme-right movements. The rise of modernised and democratic political parties has often entailed a desire for the extreme right to distance itself from its violent reputation, even if the parties are still occasionally caught up in controversies involving violence. Because of this, extreme-right supporters can react in different ways to violent incidents carried out in the name of their ideology. On one forum on the shootings by Wade Michael Page comments do not explicitly express approval, but do blame non-whites for causing conflict by their presence (for example, “All assorted nonwhites get the fuck out to your respective homelands and shit like this will never happen; true peace on earth”; “Where is the crime in this act?”; as well as “Breivik had a better idea”<sup>103</sup>) with a

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<sup>100</sup> Katya Adler, ‘Neo-Nazi outrage stuns Germany’, *BBC News*, 19 Dec 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2591615.stm>, accessed 30 May 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Der Bundesgerichtshof, ‘Bundesgerichtshof entscheidet im Fall des “Potslow-Mordes”’, Aug 2004, <http://juris.bundesgerichtshof.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bgh&Art=en&Datum=2004-8&nr=32127&linked=pm&Blank=>, accessed 30 May 2013; M. Lukashewitsch, ‘Strafe im Mordfall Potslow verschärft’, *Die Welt*, 22 Dec 2004, <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article360081/Strafe-im-Mordfall-Potslow-verschaerft.html>, accessed 30 May 2013.

<sup>102</sup> Adler, ‘Neo-Nazi outrage stuns Germany’.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Wisconsin: Shooting at Sikh Temple’, *Vanguard News Network Forum*, created 5 Aug 2012, <http://vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=144540>, accessed 16 May 2013.

thread on Breivik's attacks explicit in its praise ("He's a hero that killed future Bill and Hilary Clinton's [sic]"; "Breivik broke into the sick leftist orgy of Utoya [sic] island and started slaying the beasts, dishing out righteous justice left and right to the present and future destroyers of Norway"; "Anyone responsible for 75+ dead communists is a hero in my book"<sup>104</sup>). At the same time, others bemoan the way in which such actions make the task of advancing extreme-right ideology so much harder. A typical example is evident on the Stormfront forum regarding Deryl Dedmon, a white teen convicted for the murder of an African-American man:

It is a damnable waste of this young man's life. If we had gotten to him first and explained that ours is a protracted struggle and that misdirected violence will do nothing for the White man who uses it or for our race, he could be on his way to being a leader in the movement, instead of a prisoner.<sup>105</sup>

There is clearly a split between those who see violence as a necessary step given the inevitability of race war, and those who feel that the violent reputation of the extreme right is inhibiting its ability to attract supporters.

While supporters of the same broad political ideology—and fans of the same music—can have directly contrasting views on the role of violence within that ideology, violence still has a dominant place in extreme-right culture, particularly the subject matter of much extreme-right music. Especially important here is the propagandistic and indoctrinating role of music and the effect that the prevalence of violent subject matter might have, with many writers citing specific examples where music is the first step in a radicalisation process which leads to violent actions.<sup>106</sup> Even so, such accounts also acknowledge that exposure to this music before or during acts of violence is not necessarily a causal factor in the violence itself:

[W]hite power music can play an indirect role in making violence—especially certain types of violence, such as hate crimes—more likely because it helps

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<sup>104</sup> 'Breivik Poll', *Vanguard News Network Forum*, <http://vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=138648>, created 9 Feb 2012, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>105</sup> 'White teen in Mississippi indicted for capital murder, hate crime', *Stormfront*, created 22 Sep 2011, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t833707/>, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Devin Burghart, 'Beyond Boots and Braces: The White Power Skinhead Music Scene in the United States', in Burghart (ed.), *Soundtracks to the White Revolution: White Supremacist Assaults on Youth Music Subcultures*, Chicago: Center for New Community, 1999, pp.38-39.

make it more acceptable within the movement. However, one must always treat such an influence cautiously, because while white power music might possibly play a role in egging a listener to violence, it is obviously true that many people will like white power music because they have already accepted the idea that racial violence is justified. In such cases, the music may not so much influence them as simply reflect back opinions that they already share. Of course, even in such situations, the music can reinforce those opinions.<sup>107</sup>

It is clear that, even in cases where music and violence are associated, the relationship between them is not necessarily the same across different incidents: what might incite one act might simply accompany the other with no real effect. But the role of music in recruitment, a first stage towards the potential enactment of violence, is obvious, even if this is also unlikely to be an absolute function of the music:

[C]learly, it isn't simply energy and emotion that drive a member of the White Aryan Resistance to attack a person of color, or that enable African American activists in Georgia in 1962 to stand up to institutionalized repression and vigilante violence. These various aspects of music and musicking, once again, interact, with each other and with nonmusical factors, to support activism.... White power rock helps a young person identify his group; the words to the songs give him an analysis of where his problems come from, supplemented by the reading he's done in the magazines his favorite bands have recommended. On a given night, singing along to Skrewdriver roaring in the background, he takes the step into action that his ideology, his identity, his peers, his group, all seem to suggest is necessary.<sup>108</sup>

Music, then, is not the sole driver towards ideological action—and its manifestation through violence—but it can be a powerful component. It is important to note that while listening to extreme-right music will not inevitably provoke a violent reaction, violent incidents can still be contextualised, instigated and incited by music.

Even if violence is not seen as an inevitability, it still holds a significant place in the extreme-right imagination. Music to imagine violence can remind listeners of the sacrifice they are expected to make for their cause, but also the rewards that will ensue from this sacrifice. It can also allow the listener to indulge in fantasies in which enemies are punished for their degeneracy. Music to commemorate violence,

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<sup>107</sup> Anti-Defamation League, *The Sounds of Hate: The White Power Music Scene in the United States in 2012*, New York: 2012, pp.13-14.

<sup>108</sup> Rob Rosenthal & Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2011, p.118.

seen most clearly in the depiction of extreme-right supporters as warriors and their placing in a line of warrior archetypes such as the Vikings and Nazis (see Chapter Six), gives a context and legitimacy to struggle. Such functions are arguably as significant as the use of music to accompany and incite actual violence.

Perhaps most importantly, the significance of violence places an emphasis on a specific notion of masculinity. The particular appeal of extreme-right politics to marginalised white men has seen it associated with the idea of a current “crisis” of masculinity. In this understanding, modern processes of deindustrialisation, and a resulting reduction of reliance on physical strength in the workplace, have challenged men’s privileged place in the employment market. Added to this, feminist successes in increasing the proportion of women in the workplace and, in the context of the extreme right, the ethnic diversification of labour forces, is said to have isolated and disorientated the modern man.<sup>109</sup>

The extent to which this “crisis” exists is questionable. A focus on the changing nature of the job market, and a supposed subsequent loss of power for certain strata of the workforce, suggests that this is a problem for the working-class, rather than a challenge to masculinity. It has also been argued that this “crisis” is merely a result of the “unmarked normativity” of white men being challenged;<sup>110</sup> while the extent to which this is a recent phenomenon has also been questioned.<sup>111</sup> Even so, this crisis is said to be a significant contributory factor for the existence of and recruitment to extreme-right movements.

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<sup>109</sup> For typical expressions regarding this “crisis,” see comments made by Australian archaeologist Peter McAllister in Thomas Rogers, ‘The dramatic decline of the modern man’, *Salon*, 14 Nov 2010, [http://www.salon.com/2010/11/14/manthropology\\_interview/singleton/](http://www.salon.com/2010/11/14/manthropology_interview/singleton/), accessed 16 May 2013; and those of senior Labour (UK) politician Diane Abbot, ‘Diane Abbot to warn of British “masculinity crisis”’, *BBC News*, 15 May 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22530184>, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Sally Robinson, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, p.2.

<sup>111</sup> John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2001, pp.89-93.



The supposed obsolescence of masculine values is seen as a sign of the inherently underachieving nature of extreme-right supporters, as in this assessment of skinheads:

Skin bravado was, in fact, loser nihilism; all they were good at was aggro and kicking people when they were down. Their power came from having nothing to lose. They knew where they were (lost) and what they were (rubbish) in a world which didn't even need their muscle power any more.<sup>112</sup>

However, others view a yearning for the reassertion of masculine dominance as a natural reaction to a changing world:

It is hardly surprising, then, that American men lacking confidence in the government and the economy, troubled by the changing relations between the sexes, uncertain of their identity or their future began to dream, to fantasize about the powers and features of another kind of man who could retake and reorder the world. And the hero of all these dreams was the para-military warrior.<sup>113</sup>

Kimmel and Ferber argue that the militia man is the embodiment of these dreams, but the role could also be assumed by “warrior” figures such as skinheads. Often, these dreams of re-establishing white masculine dominance also entail the punishment of those responsible: someone will eventually pay for the perceived marginalisation of white men. Eventually, they will have an opportunity to demonstrate their physical superiority.

Violence may be linked mostly with youth, with skinheads generally being seen as a youth cult, and most extreme-right music targeted at a youth market. That is not to say that violent acts are only the work of adolescents, but that it is generally youths who are encouraged to do it; in the militia movements of the United States, the active terrorists tend to be in their twenties, while the typical member is likely to be in their late thirties to their fifties. Militias are regarded as a more focused form of extreme-right organisation, to which young men “graduate” following the hate crimes committed in their youth.<sup>114</sup> With this in mind, extreme-right music might

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<sup>112</sup> David Widgery, *Beating Time: Riot 'n' Race 'n' Rock 'n' Roll*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1986, p. 79.

<sup>113</sup> William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams* [1994], quoted in Kimmel and Ferber, ““White Men Are This Nation””, pp.585-586.

<sup>114</sup> Kimmel and Ferber, ““White Men Are This Nation””, p.589.

encourage young men to “prove” their masculinity in an approved way, although more research would be necessary to see if it truly has this effect.



**Chapter Six:**  
**“Saga Music”: Paganism, Myth and Fantasy in the Extreme-Right  
Music Scene**

*“We shall remain forever loyal to our gods up high;  
In Asgard they shall reign throughout the great Nordic skies;  
We still fight on to this day to restore the great Norse way;  
It will be hard but we won’t quit till we’ve removed this God of lies;  
Let us not forget our past, and stories of long time told;  
Remember the many fallen who died in the battles of old.”*  
Ásatrú, ‘Ásatrú Warriors’, 2249 RE—Demos, Blind Leper, 1999.

*“Be a Berserker until the day you depart for Valhalla with a  
pound of the enemies [sic] lead in your still defiant body!!!”*

David Lane, ‘Open Letter to a Dead Race’,  
*Collection of Works of David Lane*, n.d., p.193.

*“I prophesise the coming era of the great rebirth of Paganism, the rebirth of the  
Aryan Pagan Empire, stronger because of the experiences of the last two thousand  
years. More than a thousand years of Christian rule that is strange to our true  
Pagan culture could not stand the test of time, as today Christianity collapses, and  
we find that true European Pagan traditions and belief survived.... The sounds of  
war horns will get us heated to fight. A lot of us will die, but we will die with joy,  
because we want to let our blood flow for the glory of the Pagan Aryan Empire.”*

‘Interview with Graveland’, *Resistance*, Iss.7 1996, p.53.

The use of mythic subjects is a common thread throughout the history of the extreme-right music scene, particularly in lyrics, but also in band names, album artwork, and diverse merchandise. While the use of myth by the contemporary extreme right is undoubtedly influenced by the ideology of Nazism, in many ways it is so markedly different that it can be considered a distinct phenomenon. This chapter assesses the place of myth in the extreme-right music scene, in lyrics, album artwork, and also the “mythologising” of particular figures. The examples cited show that the appropriation of myth by the extreme right serves two broad functions: First, it attempts to establish contemporary extreme-right movements as the inheritors of shared cultural tradition, simultaneously placing extreme-right policies as part of a shared national heritage; second, myth serves as a model for activism, with myth often serving as allegory for how contemporary struggles can be won. A further function that myth can serve is aiding the imagining of a broader community;<sup>1</sup> this is particularly evident in the use of less nationally-specific mythology (such as Viking mythology, explored below) to establish a sense of communality between the extreme-right movements in the Nordic European nations. This function can be especially useful given the lack of a shared religion across extreme-right movements.

Fantasy is used in a similar manner to myth, although not on the same scale. By drawing on established literature, particularly J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, the extreme right draw analogies between struggles of good against evil and their own political movement. Such examples are often simple to appropriate; the light-skinned races representing the forces of good in Tolkien’s work are easily contrasted with the dark-skinned evil races.

Throughout its history, the extreme-right music scene has identified itself as a political cause rather than a commercial concern.<sup>2</sup> This is reflected in the lyrical

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, London: Verso, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Although this rhetoric often contrasts with a desire to exploit the financial potential of the music, as in the National Front supporting itself through RAC bands, or William Pierce identifying Resistance Records as a source of income despite having no great affection for the music concerned.

themes that recur throughout the movement's history: as a rule, the scene eschews the conventional subjects of popular music—love and sex. Instead, love for one's country and dismay at its degeneration (usually blamed on non-“indigenous” ethnic groups) are the norm, although the expression varies; Skrewdriver and their contemporaries tended explicitly to demonise and attack perceived enemies (particularly communists, Jews and ethnic minorities), while “softer” recent releases have instead emphasised traditional values which are believed to represent the inherent character of the nation, albeit at times focusing on the degenerate characteristics of immigrants. While extreme-right music addresses these concerns through music set in the present-day, there is also a tendency to look to the past—especially to myth—in order to articulate these ideologies.

### **Myth, past and present**

The term “myth” has ambiguous and diverse meanings. “Myth” and “mythology” often refer to a story or collection of stories, as in “Greek myth/ology,” concerning a hero, godlike being or event, that attempts to explain a certain phenomenon which human beings routinely experience. This definition is probably most clearly illustrated by the canon of origin myths, which seek to explain how the world came into being. Often, this use of *myth* is restricted to ancient cultures, although, as discussed below, some scholars have argued that it is applicable to modern societies. In this definition *myth* and *mythology* are usually interchangeable, and also have similarities with the term “legend.”<sup>3</sup> Both *myth* and *mythology* can also be used to refer to scholarship (hereon referred to as “myth studies”) associated with these stories and canons.

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<sup>3</sup> Some definitions hold that myth is supernatural while legend is plausible—perhaps influencing the common understanding of myth as something false—but this distinction is not rigorously applied. Flood also asserts that legend is not considered sacred—while myth is—by the society/group in which it has validity, although he admits that such boundaries are fluid in practice. Christopher G. Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996, p. 32.

While this definition is ambiguous enough, the usage of “myth” in everyday language presents a further complication. At its simplest, “myth” is frequently used to describe anything that is false, and to draw attention to the falsity of the thing. Related to this is the definition of myth as a widely-held collective belief in something false. “Myth” has also been incorporated into semiotics, particularly influenced by Barthes’ analysis of “modern myths” and his contention that myth is a mode of speech, through which socially constructed notions and ideologies become naturalised in a society’s collective consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will consider and employ myth mainly in the sense of a canon of widely-known stories, but even this apparently narrower definition is fraught with difficulties and ambiguities. Flood notes that, despite “the apparent importance attached to myth in contemporary societies,” the study of myth from a range of disciplinary perspectives, rather than bringing “richness in diversity,” has in fact led to fragmentation and a lack of consensus over the phenomenon and the term.<sup>5</sup> With such a proliferation of theories about myth, it is worth taking a moment to detail how this chapter understands the term.

Many myth scholars have restricted the term’s application to “primitive” societies, precluding the formation of modern myths. This assertion is sometimes justified with the claim that myth is an attempt to understand and explain the world before the advent of conceptual reason, with the mythic mode of thought sometimes referred to as “prelogical.” Ernst Cassirer, in *Language and Myth*, argued that “before man thinks in terms of logical concepts, he holds his experiences by means of clear, separate, mythical images.”<sup>6</sup> As Cassirer viewed language and myth as different stems of the same root, he believed that the process of abstracting language from its prehistoric, and mythic, origin and significance was part of the advance from

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<sup>4</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘Myth Today’ [1957], in *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers. London: Vintage Books, 2009, pp.131-187.

<sup>5</sup> Flood. *Political Myth*, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* [1925], trans. by Susanne K. Langer, New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1946, p.37.

“‘momentary gods’... born from the need or the specific feeling of a critical moment” to the use of language in the service of logic.<sup>7</sup> Despite noting the period of momentary gods as the “lowest form,” and referring to a diverse assortment of non-European cultures as “savages,” Cassirer was not necessarily arguing the inferiority of pre-Enlightenment humanity. Instead, he was articulating the relatively common view in myth studies that myth served the purpose of explaining the world until the intellectual tools of logic and science were of a sufficient standard to make myth’s function obsolete. The prevalence of irrationality, and hence myth, was in this model confined to the distant past or to distant cultures.

Cassirer himself changed his position in *The Myth of the State*.<sup>8</sup> Here the perceived irrationality of myth was found in the rise of National Socialism, a decidedly modern phenomenon. Flood, in his *Political Myth*, drew comparisons—as well as distinctions—between the “sacred myth” of ancient societies and the “political myth” of contemporary ones (citing *The Myth of the State* specifically as a “pioneering contribution to the study of political myth”<sup>9</sup>). Linking the definition of political myth to concepts of sacred myth and political ideology, Flood defines it as

an ideologically marked account of past, present, or predicted political events. By *ideologically marked*, I mean that the narrative discourse carries the imprint of the assumptions, values, and goals associated with a specific ideology or identifiable family of ideologies, and that it therefore conveys an explicit or implicit invitation to assent to a particular ideological standpoint.<sup>10</sup>

It is Flood’s concept of political myths which will mainly be employed in this chapter, since extreme-right use of myth is—clearly—ideologically marked, but I do not draw as clear a distinction between “sacred” and “political” myths as Flood does, partly, as he argues, because they serve broadly similar purposes, and partly because the process by which the extreme right creates political from sacred myths blurs any clear distinction between the two.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.62, cf. Ibid. p.97.

<sup>8</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, London: Oxford University Press, 1946.

<sup>9</sup> Flood, *Political Myth*, p.257.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.42, Flood’s emphasis.



Some definitions of myth restrict themselves to narratives concerning the creation of the world and the human race, and to the affairs of the gods. Such restrictive definitions preclude the creation of modern myths based on the culture hero who, according to Flood, “is not normally portrayed as the creator of the world but is the one who completes the world by making it habitable for man, thus bringing culture. Often the son of the creator-god, he embodies both the divine and the human.”<sup>11</sup> One need only think of Arthurian legend to see an example of the apparent divinity of man, a divinity which elements of the extreme right have advocated for their own cultural heroes (see Contemporary mythologising, below).

My definition of “myth” is deliberately broad, partly in order to accommodate the diverse ways in which it is employed by the extreme right, and partly because this chapter is not intended to lead to a greater understanding of the concept of myth itself, but to achieve a greater understanding of the extreme right through its employment of myth. In his historical assessment of myth studies, Cassirer writes that “Every scholar still found in myth those objects with which he was most familiar. At bottom the different schools saw in the magic mirror of myth only their own faces.”<sup>12</sup> Cassirer’s account certainly lends weight to his thesis, as he outlines the multitude of ways in which scholars have attempted to establish a single unifying theory of myth, relating it to inherent human characteristics, whether to do with sexuality, linguistics etc. While no theory has established itself, Cassirer’s concept of the “magic mirror” is itself useful; just as theories of myth revealed the academic interests of scholars, so the use of myth by the extreme right reveals ideological evolution and nuance.

Bronisław Malinowski, in his analysis of Melanesian societies, writes that myth fulfils “an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>12</sup> Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p.46.

practical rules for the guidance of man.”<sup>13</sup> Although Malinowski’s work was conducted on a society in which myth was held to be literally true—something which might not be said for all mythic appropriations by the extreme right—his thesis seems just as relevant to contemporary mythologising; in his analysis of Melanesian culture, Malinowski considers how historical accuracy is subordinate to the propagandistic needs of the tale-tellers:

The historical consideration of myth is interesting, therefore, in that it shows that myth, taken as a whole, cannot be sober dispassionate history, since it is always made *ad hoc* to fulfil a certain sociological function, to glorify a certain group, or to justify an anomalous status. These considerations show us also that to the native mind immediate history, semi-historic legend, and unmixed myth flow into one another, form a continuous sequence, and fulfil really the same sociological function. And this brings us once more to our original contention that the really important thing about the myth is its character of a retrospective, ever-present, live actuality.<sup>14</sup>

This chapter explores similar cases of a more contemporary nature in which established myth is mixed together with historical and contemporary figures and events to fulfill the ideological needs of the extreme right. Within the vast canon of belligerent lyrics in extreme-right music, myth provides a context and a continuum for present-day activity. As well as providing subject matter consistent with the scene’s narrative of being concerned with more weighty matters than the commercial music industry, this use of myth perpetuates the notion of the chosen few, simultaneously exhorting those few to overcome their difficulties and march on to greatness. This particular usage of myth also asserts a common bond between nationally and linguistically distinct peoples, arguing that they share a common heritage in particular historic and mythic tropes, particularly the Vikings.

### **The lure of the Vikings**

In 2001 the BNP magazine *Identity* included an article purporting to be a “reprinting” from a 2005 Australian nationalist magazine (in fact written specifically for *Identity*),

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<sup>13</sup> Bronisław Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology* [1926], Westport, Connecticut: Negro Universities Press, 1971, p.19.

<sup>14</sup> Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, p.58.

discussing the rise of a new phenomenon: “White Roots Music.” Perhaps, through its format, betraying the influence of *The Turner Diaries*, the article touches on the imagined evolution of extreme-right musics, including the creation of “Saga Music”:

Still other bands, meanwhile, set about creating an alternative to commercial black rap by fusing modern dance, garage and industrial music with lyrics taken from the Western poetic tradition—a concept initially dubbed “White Rap,” but later described by the more apt term “Saga Music,” after the way in which the ancient Viking tales were originally recited with musical accompaniment. Beowulf, Tennyson’s ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ and extracts from accounts of the Battle of Rorke’s Drift were all brought to life for a fresh generation in this way (much to the horror of intellectual snobs who wanted to keep them untouched, particularly by “rough” working class kids).<sup>15</sup>

Here is an idealised example of the place of myth in the extreme-right music scene. The “saga” of the Vikings is unproblematically cited as part of the heritage of Britain, perhaps through a conception of it as part of a pan-North European identity (examined in more detail below). The inclusion of accounts from Rorke’s Drift, where the imperial British army “heroically” fought off the hordes of “barbaric” native Zulus, is hardly subtle in its analogy.

Remarkably, there have indeed been attempts to create Saga Music, or at least a nationalist alternative to rap.<sup>16</sup> Evidence is reported in two conflicting sources—BNP’s *Identity* and anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight*—and their accounts of the entertainment at the 2002 Red White and Blue Festival. *Identity* makes reference to “an innovative setting of several Kipling poems to electronic dance music by “M.C. Kipling,”<sup>17</sup> while a *Searchlight* infiltrator reports that: “One good laugh for all the wrong reasons was Wordsworth, who, the BNP claims, is the only white rap artist. He gave up after a couple of attempts and told the audience he would change his

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Building a Nationalist Music Alternative’, *Identity*, No.18 March 2002, p.9.

<sup>16</sup> White nationalist hip-hop groups have emerged in Germany, despite the seeming contradiction of preaching racial supremacy through a primarily black medium. It has been argued, however, that these groups use controversial lyrics for shock value, thus attracting greater attention and increased sales. It is also seen as an indication of the difficulties surrounding the construction of a new German identity based on imported American culture and German history. The relatively mainstream—albeit transgressive—position of these acts indicates their distance from the extreme-right music scene proper. See Michael T. Putnam and John T. Littlejohn, ‘National Socialism with Fler? German Hip Hop from the Right’ in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol.30 No.4 October 2007, pp.453-68.

<sup>17</sup> *Identity*, No.24 September 2002, p.14.

material for next year.”<sup>18</sup> Whatever the reality, these experiments were never repeated and have no trace on BNP releases, so it seems safe to say they did not meet with a positive reception from the Red White and Blue audience.

While the prophecy of “Saga music” remains unfulfilled, the ideology behind it is evident in much of the extreme-right music scene’s output.<sup>19</sup> One particular issue that extreme-right ideology has been keen to address is the lack of a shared religion which can be held up as a unifying factor across disparate nations. The different denominations of Christianity, and the rivalries between them, have led some sections of the movement to identify forcefully with one or another; for example, the British extreme right has generally been strongly anti-Papist, due to its Unionist stance.<sup>20</sup>

There are also those who reject Christianity altogether, citing its roots in Judaism and suggesting it is another manifestation of Jewish global domination. Groups such as Christian Identity have reconciled their faith with anti-Semitism and racism through the belief that white Europeans are the descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel, that Jews are the children of Satan and that non-white “mud people” are inferior creatures with no soul, created before Adam and Eve. Christian Identity therefore interprets extreme-right ideology as compatible with Christian doctrine, but the movement is essentially restricted to the United States, and its adherents are estimated to be relatively few, at around 25,000.<sup>21</sup> While some extreme-right supporters are comfortable with Christianity, others view it as a Jewish construction

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<sup>18</sup> *Searchlight*, No.327 September 2002, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> This is assuming that the ideology of “Saga music” is taken at face-value, as the recontextualisation of cultural heritage for a modern audience. Given attempts by the extreme-right music scene to establish itself in a variety of genres, it could be argued that the intention of “Saga music” is to take an established and popular musical form—in this case rap, primarily associated with “black” culture—and to assign “white” origins to it.

<sup>20</sup> An example of Loyalist affinities is demonstrated by the *Searchlight* report that Nick Griffin travelled to Northern Ireland when he was part of the National Front directorate “to cement links between the organisation and Loyalist paramilitaries.” *Searchlight*, No.137 Nov 1986, p.3.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Extremism in America: Christian Identity’, *Anti-Defamation League*, n.d., [http://archive.adl.org/learn/ext\\_us/christian\\_identity.html](http://archive.adl.org/learn/ext_us/christian_identity.html), accessed 15 Jun 2012.

which is “alien” to the white race, or see it as too “soft,” looking instead to identify with something more European in heritage, and with more emphasis on strength and power.

This has led to an increased interest in Paganism and its associated mythical canon, optimistically identified as a true Nordic religion and a source of communal white identity, resulting in neo-Paganist movements drawing particularly on Viking culture, such as Odinism or Asatrú. Mattias Gardell asserts that in the United States racist paganism is surpassing “national socialist parties and the Ku Klux Klan(s), in terms of numbers and influence.”<sup>22</sup>

Of course, Paganism is not restricted solely to the extreme right, and there are various branches of Paganism active in contemporary society. In her introduction to a collection of essays considering the various denominations, Charlotte Hardman posits that “[t]he interest in Paganism today in the UK and the USA may be interpreted as a response to an increasing dissatisfaction with the way the world is going ecologically, spiritually and materially; people are disillusioned by mainstream religion and the realisation that materialism leaves an internal emptiness.”<sup>23</sup> Disillusion is often cited as a reason for the increasing electoral success of the extreme right,<sup>24</sup> with minor alterations the preceding quote could well describe the attractions of the extreme right in the modern political environment.

Viking paganism undoubtedly incorporates a racial element, even outwith those groups explicitly identified with the extreme right, as detailed by Graham Harvey in his summary of one of the British sects:

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<sup>22</sup> Mattias Gardell. *Gods of the Blood*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> Charlotte Hardman, ‘Introduction’, in Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, London: Thorsons, 1995, x.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Hainsworth, ‘Introduction: the extreme right’ in Hainsworth (ed.), *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the margins to the mainstream*. London: Pinter, 2000, p.9; Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, ‘Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre’, in *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, p.1; Roger Eatwell and Matthew J. Goodwin, ‘Introduction: The ‘new’ extremism in twenty-first-century Britain’ in *The New Extremism in 21st Century Britain*, London: Routledge, 2010, p.6.

A major stress of this Odinic Rite is summed up in the words beneath their logo: “Faith, Folk, Family.” Along with other Heathen groups they are keen to stress that they are not racist but do believe that each “race” has a tradition which people would be more fulfilled following. They encourage the development of the culture of each “race” believing that only confusion and stress can come from the mix of peoples and cultures. Odinism is considered to be the primary cultural tradition of the people of Britain descended from German and Scandinavian ancestry. Nonetheless... the Odinic Rite [do not] have much time for “political correctness,” and some members certainly hold views similar to those of right-wing political groups.<sup>25</sup>

This is certainly not true of all Odinic sects (see particularly The Odinshof<sup>26</sup>), but such groups must nevertheless be careful about the publicity of their activities, especially given the negative connotations of some Viking symbolism such as the swastika (the swastika, or fylfot, is found on numerous Viking artefacts). On the other hand, these religious groups do not associate themselves explicitly with extreme-right politics, and ethnocentric views are entirely compatible with, for example, Celtic paganism. However, the particular interest of the extreme right in Viking culture is something of an exception to the typical trends: “The main spiritual paths of Paganism to be found in the UK and the United States are Wicca, Druidry, Shamanism, Goddess Spirituality, Sacred Ecology, Heathenism and various Magical Groups....”<sup>27</sup> Evidently, Viking paganism offers its own peculiar attractions, above and beyond popular pagan alternatives.

One place where fascination with Vikings and extreme-right music is particularly significant is Sweden, one of the historical heartlands of the Viking diaspora. The term “Vikingarock” (“Viking Rock”) is used to describe a genre of music which merged elements of folk music with rock and punk, and came to prominence in the 1990s with the Swedish band Ultima Thule. As discussed in Chapter One, the association of Ultima Thule—the only extreme-right band ever signed to a major label—with organisations such as Bevara Sverige Svenskt (Keep

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<sup>25</sup> Graham Harvey, ‘Heathenism: a North European Pagan Tradition’, in Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*, London: Thorsons, 1995, p.56.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.57.

<sup>27</sup> Hardman, ‘Introduction’, x-xi.

Sweden Swedish), and their links with more explicitly racist bands and labels, has resulted in the term's interchangeability with other labels such as "white power music."

Unsurprisingly given the genre they operate in, the Viking theme recurs throughout Ultima Thule's catalogue, most notably in album titles such as *Vikingabalk* and *Vikingablod*. Old Norse imagery is used to the utmost, as in the artwork of *För Fäderneslandet*, which shows a Viking, complete with mythic horned helmet, at the helm of a longship. The cover of *Vikingabalk* endeavours to naturalise the relationship between Vikings and modern Swedish identity, juxtaposing the Swedish flag with a warrior's helmet. The link between Sweden's past and a present sense of belonging is evident in Ultima Thule's lyrics, which often take a belligerent form. Viking symbolism and references thus become a shorthand for the notion that Swedishness is restricted to the "natives," and must be fought for.



Fig. 4: Ultima Thule's album *För Fäderneslandet*, Ultima Thule Records, 1992.

Outside of Scandinavia, the preoccupation with the Vikings might seem strange, especially when a more apt heritage appears to be available (such as Anglo-Saxons in England). There are three main functions that Viking mythology fulfills for the extreme-right. The first of these is intimated in Andrew Wawn's description of the Viking vogue in the Victorian era, with the argument that "Anglo-Saxonism has

never found the right logo.”<sup>28</sup> This was the period in which much of the iconography of Vikings (particularly long-ships and horned helmets) was established, and Wawn’s analysis cuts to the heart of the Viking appeal: their instant recognisability. Actually practising paganism might be rare, but their iconography is easily recognised and reproduced. Many adherents to extreme-right ideology esteem the Vikings, perhaps in part due to similar Nazi appropriation; the Scandinavian Odal rune was adopted by an SS division during the war and has since been revived and imitated by various extreme-right groups.

Alongside the PR success detailed by Wawn, Viking culture also represents a golden age, as articulated by Gardell:

Nationalists generally produce an imagined community by projecting the idea of a corporative nation back into legendary or mythological time, often presented as a “golden age,” a time untainted by the ills of the modern world and liberated from whomever is designated the national enemy. Frequently, the nationalist intends to revert to the ideals of the glorious high culture, albeit adopted to suit current conditions. Thus the importance of pre-Christian Norse culture to Aryan pagans....<sup>29</sup>

While Gardell’s work is primarily restricted to those who use Norse traditions to fulfill spiritual needs, such projections are not restricted to the religious. In appropriating these traditions and symbols, the contemporary extreme right presents itself as the authentic heir to North European tradition. This serves the additional function of asserting a homogeneous North European identity, which transcends national borders.

Finally, the Vikings fulfill a particular standard as a warrior race. While mythic subjects are fairly common in extreme-right music, they are scarce in comparison to songs which speak in genericisms of soldiers, battles and martyrdom. While these are often vague, the Vikings provide a notable example of the warlike supremacy of the white race, despite the fact that they were mainly fighting other whites. The rhetoric of the extreme right is frequently couched in combative

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000, p.372.

<sup>29</sup> Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, p.5.



language; this is especially true of Skrewdriver and their contemporaries, who lauded skinheads and street culture as the partisans of the modern-day battlefield. As shown below, this link is often made explicit; the warriors of the past share the spirit of the warriors of today, and in turn, their battles are cast as glorious in an attempt to legitimise the violence carried out in the name of the extreme right.

Towards the end of their career, references to myth began to appear frequently in Skrewdriver songs. This paralleled the growing number of extreme-right supporters paying homage to pagan gods—particularly from Norse mythology—despite a professed goal of protecting White Protestants. While it was not until 1989's *Warlord* that Skrewdriver would include explicit references to mythology in their songs, they had been using its imagery since their return to music as a political band. The cover of *Hail The New Dawn* shows a Viking raiding party disembarking a longboat; *Blood & Honour* shows a muscular Viking with a bloodstained axe surveying a landscape; *Warlord* has a prominent spear-armed Viking in the background, while a tank makes its way over a road of skulls (Fig. 5); while *The*



Fig. 5: Skrewdriver, *Warlord*, Rock-O-Rama, 1989.

*Strong Survive* settles for the relative simplicity of a bare-chested Viking armed with an improbably large axe staring at the observer.<sup>30</sup>

A popular lyrical theme is Valhalla, a symbol which fulfills two functions: it asserts the existence of a chosen few; and maps the obligations one must accomplish in order to take his<sup>31</sup> place among them, in this case fighting for the supremacy of the white race. The sense

<sup>30</sup> All of these covers, which are illustrations, trade in caricatures. Vikings are represented with horned helmets, long flowing hair and beards, and an assortment of weapons. On *Blood & Honour* and *The Strong Survive* they are also presented in minimal clothing, with prominent and accented musculature.

<sup>31</sup> When gender is specified, it is exclusively masculine.

of appointedness is also relevant to considerations of paganism in general, as Harvey states: “The attractions of quasi-secret society membership, those special and different from the rest with additional magical powers to boot, supports the *myth of the Chosen Few* and segments within paganism exist to meet the needs of those seduced by such elitist conceptions.”<sup>32</sup> In this context, Skrewdriver’s cover of White Lion’s ‘The Road to Valhalla’ (*Freedom What Freedom*, Rock-O-Rama, 1992) is made to conform to extreme-right ideology:

There is a road and it leads to Valhalla;  
Where only the chosen are allowed.

References to Valhalla are not restricted to ideologically pliable covers; No Remorse, a band second only to Skrewdriver in their popularity in the extreme-right scene, espouse a similar ideology in their song ‘See You In Valhalla’ (*See You In Valhalla*, RAC Records, 1989):

Young warrior, with heart of pride;  
Goddess of fate by his side;  
Out to fight for kith and kin;  
The rage of Odin to forge his wind;  
He raised his sword and slayed his foe;  
He was brought to the ground by an enemy bow;  
I saw that great warrior fall;  
And this is what I heard him call;  
[chorus]  
I stood by my people and my people’s needs;  
And if a man is judged by his deeds;  
Then I’ll see you in Valhalla.

Valhalla serves a dual purpose, as both a spiritual and a material goal. While its spiritual origin is made clear in the context of No Remorse’s fallen warrior, it also serves as a promised land in conjunction with the myth of the chosen few. The implication is that the road to Valhalla, in the custody of Skrewdriver, consists of adherence to extreme-right ideology, which will itself result in the establishment of an earthly Utopia.

References to Viking Gods are restricted to Odin and Thor, as in No Remorse’s ‘Son of Odin’ (*See You In Valhalla*, RAC Records, 1989):

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<sup>32</sup> Harvey, ‘Heathenism’, p.20, his emphasis.

Cowards tremble, men stand tall;  
The strong survive, the weak they fall;  
The time has come for the giants of men;  
With the smash of his hammer nothing can contend.

[chorus]

Son of Odin, God of war;  
Mighty hammer in the name of Thor.

The attraction of these two particular gods from a vast canon is fairly plain; their martial associations and the undoubted power they wield are employed as an allegory for the struggles of the contemporary extreme right. Thor's Hammer (Mjölnir) has particular resonance—interpreted as representing the strength of the Aryan race—and has been adopted by extreme-right supporters, particularly in tattoos and on clothing. As well as being cited in lyrics, Mjölnir was the name of a German band (operating in the 1990s before splitting up due to the attention of the authorities), and Thor's Hammer was the name of a Polish band active between 1997 and 2003. The latter made clear their hostility towards Christianity, as well as their belief in the coming revival of the heathen past, in 'May the Hammer Smash the Cross' (*May the Hammer Smash the Cross*, Ancestral Research Records, 2000):

May the hammer smash the cross, turn to pieces Jesus' corpse;  
May the wrath of the folk drive the foreign prophets out;  
What is alien, what is wrong shall be banished or destroyed;  
From the mighty heathen past warriors' spirits shall arise.

While some bands use Norse symbols as a means to attack Christianity, others see it as a means of cleansing, framing it in a similar way to the purging power of violence explored in Chapter Five, as in Skrewdriver's 'God of Thunder' (*Freedom What Freedom*):

Panic spreads, misery;  
Lot of people live in poverty;  
Decline of Europe, decline of man;  
Long time ago when the rot began;  
We need a saviour, before long;  
Must be soon before the chance is gone;  
The great leader, from the north;  
A true warrior to defend the cause;

[chorus]

God of Thunder, God of War;  
Hail Europe! Hail Thor!  
God of Thunder, God of War;  
Hail Europe! Hail Thor!

Here, Norse Gods are proclaimed as saviours, as true warriors and as indicative of European superiority, all important aspects of extreme-right rhetoric.

In his assessment of the influence of James Macpherson's *Ossian* on Scottish identity, Stefan Thomas Hall proposes the following as Macpherson's motivation:

Fame is only won by doing something. Heroes are only celebrated as beams of light if they fight. Mourning fallen heroes is fine, but not grieving to the point of inaction. The point of mourning and reflecting on one's dead ancestors is to inspire action and to generate more fame for one's self and one's race. Macpherson's scheme of presenting us with melancholic ancient poetry is not simply to make us mourn these dead heroes but to inspire the race of Highlanders to more fame, a fame gained through remembering the past and acting on it, a fame derived from being able to say that the Highlanders have famous ancestors who "were renowned in their day, the terror of other times."<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, the use of the Vikings is a similar call to action. The examples cited above make clear the combative rhetoric favoured by the extreme right; the cause is a battle, and supporters are warriors. By using the imagery and symbolism of the Vikings' martial prowess and ferocity—to the exclusion of their achievements as immigrants, farmers and traders—the extreme right make clear that their interpretation is based on force and combat. This is reinforced by the references to Norse gods; of the vast canon available, only Odin and Thor—God of War and hammer-wielding warrior respectively—are routinely referenced, making clear the one-dimensional interpretation of Viking culture by the extreme right.

While the Vikings are thus interpreted to conform to certain facets of extreme-right ideology, they also serve an important function as a lingua franca across various extreme-right movements. Viking iconography is instantly recognisable, and is far less controversial than the use of Nazi symbolism. Norse religion also provides a supposedly authentic Aryan religion which not only has the potential to override Christian factionalism, but is presented as a counter to the Jewish influence of Christianity. In this way, Viking myth and imagery have come to signify the internationalism of the extreme right.

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<sup>33</sup> Stefan Thomas Hall, 'James Macpherson's *Ossian*: Forging Ancient Highland Identity for Scotland', in Andrew Wawn (ed.), *Constructing Nations, Reconstructing Myth: Essays in Honour of T.A. Shippey*, Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007, p.23.

## Arthurian Nationalism

Attempts have also been made to mine nation-specific mythologies; in a British context, the most conspicuous example is the use of Arthurian mythology. This association is at least as old as the National Front, which had its HQ at Excalibur House, while the splinter group National Front Constitutional Movement published a journal of the same name, with one issue including the “theme tune” of the movement, also called Excalibur.<sup>34</sup> The BNP has carried on this tradition, with its merchandising arm also bearing the name Excalibur. It is significant that the most frequently cited aspect of Arthurian mythology is his sword; as in the case of the Vikings, myth seems to be particularly valued for its militancy. Excalibur plays a further role in its association with the rightful rule of Britain; by staking claim to Excalibur, the extreme right cast themselves as speaking for the nation, as its rightful rulers.

The myth of Arthur’s return at a time of great need tallies well with extreme-right rhetoric about the apparently vulnerable position of the white race, while Excalibur itself provides a metaphor for the conflict that this will engender, and the assuredness of victory:

Excalibur, it came to Arthur - Excalibur!  
The sword that came from the lady of the lake - Excalibur!  
And one day as the nation cries in agony - Excalibur!  
The king will rise again for our people's sake.<sup>35</sup>

Even in the music of Great White Records, intended to be less confrontational than established extreme-right music, it is Excalibur which is cited. In Joey Smith’s ‘English Pride’ (*Not Just About the Music*, Great White Records, 2008), one of the manifestations of this pride is “the sword Excalibur in King Arthur’s hand.” The

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<sup>34</sup> *Searchlight*, No.59, May 1980, p.12.

<sup>35</sup> Skrewdriver, ‘Excalibur’, *Warlord*, 1989, Rock-O-Rama. As well as ‘Excalibur,’ Skrewdriver had a song named ‘Return to Camelot’ (*Freedom What Freedom*), but although the title suggests an imminent return to the glory days of England, it is in fact named after an Italian extreme-right festival of the same name that Skrewdriver performed at in 1991; the song’s lyrics are a tribute to the event and its organisers.

appeal of Arthurian legend has spread beyond Britain, with a popular Czech metal band choosing to name themselves Excalibur.

While some songs make explicit reference to Arthurian legend, others are more ambiguous in their subject, as in the title track from Skrewdriver's *Warlord* (Rock-O-Rama, 1989):

No one's ever gonna take away his land;  
Not whilst he has the power in his hands;  
He appears when his nation is in danger;  
To all our enemies he's the slayer.

While the subject of this song could be interpreted to be King Arthur, given the prominence of the once and future king in the British national consciousness, this character is only referred to ambiguously as "Warlord." 'Warlord' is followed by 'One In A Million II', a tribute to Hitler's bodyguard. Hitler is not explicitly named, but the reference to 1933 as the "start" leaves no doubt about the subject:

Into battle, a fearless man;  
Been around since the struggle began...;  
He did it all for his people;  
He stood and fought against the evil...;  
'33 was the order's start;  
Ten thousand to begin the guard...;  
They marched from tyranny to freedom;  
The people with the hero there to lead them...;  
Now they're ready to give their all;  
They can hear their forefathers' call;  
Death will march at their right hand;  
Victory will be the black bands';  
Marching for a Europe of the people;  
And at their head their gallant leader.

The "gallant leader" of the final line may not necessarily refer to the sleeping hero awakened, but may simply refer to the figurehead being fought for. While numerous such figureheads have been used for other songs (including Arthur, Odin, Thor), it seems fairly plain here that the reference is to Hitler. The myth of King Arthur's Messianic return is therefore appropriated for a newer cultural figure, part of the process of contemporary mythologising.

## Mythologising Nazism

The religiosity surrounding Hitler during the Nazi era is striking; one need only think of the cult of personality which he cultivated, the quasi-religious nature of mass rallies—complete with congregations, preaching, and sacred iconography—and the almost biblical reverence accorded by supporters to *Mein Kampf*. It is no surprise that the British extreme right of the immediate post-war period was still infatuated with this state religion, and equally unsurprising that, as a result, the movement was essentially considered by voters and the media to be the preserve of the disturbed. This negative image was reinforced by the widely reported wedding ceremony in 1963 of Françoise Dior, niece of fashion designer Christian, and Colin Jordan, one of the leading figures of the extreme right in post-war Britain (summarised here by Martin Walker):

For the occasion, she [Dior] wore a black and gold swastika necklace, encrusted with diamonds. They supped mead, toasted the British Nazi movement to the strains of the *Horst Wessel Lied*, and over a swastika-draped table, swore that they were of untainted Aryan blood, cut their fingers and let the mingled drop of blood fall on to an open page of a virgin copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Within three months they were separated; they were briefly reconciled, but Jordan was granted a divorce in October 1967.<sup>36</sup>

The reverence for the Nazis is plain throughout the history of the music scene as well, from the swastikas adorning album covers (e.g. Dirlewanger's *Rocking for the Golden Race*), to the Nazi salutes exchanged between musicians and audience at concerts; even the name Blood & Honour is taken from the motto of the Hitler Youth.

Although admiration of the Nazis obviously found expression in idolatry of Hitler, Rudolf Hess's failed attempt to broker peace with the United Kingdom is seen as a heroic effort to end the "brother war," an attempt they felt was undermined by the machinations of Communists or Jews. Skrewdriver's 'Prisoner of Peace' (*Blood & Honour*, Rock-O-Rama, 1985) implies the influence of the latter:

He stuck up for his country, but he didn't like the cost;  
The European brother war, and lives were being lost;

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<sup>36</sup> Martin Walker, *The National Front*, London: Fontana, 1977, p.45.

He saw the grieving mothers whose sons could not be found;  
He wanted peace to stop the endless coffins in the ground...;  
To sue for peace was his idea in 1941;  
But the bankers' grip was oh so tight, and the chance for peace was gone.  
[chorus]  
Free Rudolf Hess;  
How long can they keep him there? We can only guess.

Two years later Hess committed suicide, and Skrewdriver released another tribute in 'Forty-Six Years' (*After the Fire*, Rock-O-Rama, 1988):

They tried to break him with their corrupt ways;  
Offered freedom until the end of his days;  
Wanted him to denounce the Führer;  
But his devotion was always true.  
[chorus]  
Forty-six years;  
Forty-six years now;  
Forty six years;  
He stayed true to his faith.

Hess is thus held up as a kind of martyr, sacrificing himself and his career in an attempt to end a white "civil war," and then staying true to his ideals despite supposedly unjust imprisonment. Hess is still held in high esteem by the extreme right; his remains had to be exhumed and cremated and his gravestone destroyed because his burial site had become a place of pilgrimage.<sup>37</sup>

The reference to faith and devotion in 'Forty-Six Years' is significant; Nazism and racial pride are cast as a religion, the true faith. Those on the extreme right are the chosen few, persecuted on account of this faith. The chorus of No Remorse's 'One Folk, One Faith' (*Blood Against Gold*, Rock-O-Rama, 1991) makes the explicit connection between race and faith:

One Nation, One Race;  
One Folk, One Faith.

"Faith" is thus explicitly tied to race, an innate quality which has the potential to unite whites everywhere once and for all.

The moral authority of Nazism is referenced in 'The Snow Fell' (*White Rider*, Rock-O-Rama, 1987), a very popular Skrewdriver song which is perhaps even more

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<sup>37</sup> 'Top Nazi Rudolf Hess exhumed from "pilgrimage" grave', *BBC News Online*, 21 Jul 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14232768>, accessed 15 Jun 2012.



popular in Saga's cover version. It casts Stalin as "the beast" and the invading German army as "the forces of light":

They took the old roads, that Napoleon had taken before;  
They fought as the forces of light against the darkness in a holy war;  
One day they were looking out in the sunshine on the cornflowers;  
The next day they were freezing to death in the snow and the ice cold showers.  
[chorus]  
And the snow fell, covering the dreams and ideals;  
And the snow fell, freezing the blood and the wheels;  
And the snow fell, they had to keep warm for survival;  
And the snow fell, and defeated the beast's only rivals.

The mournful music of 'The Snow Fell' adds to the sense of tragedy, with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union proclaimed as a moral crusade defeated by unfortunate circumstances, with severe consequences for contemporary society. 'The Snow Fell' depicts the defeat of the Nazis by the Soviets as the low-point of the extreme-right struggle from which the white race must now rise. As such, it is part of the mythic thread that the extreme right makes between past and contemporary figures and events.

### **Making a Mythic Thread**

In September 1993, Skrewdriver frontman Ian Stuart Donaldson was killed in a car crash. Not only did this rob the scene of its most significant band and solo artist, it ended the period of relative calm when Donaldson was in control of Blood & Honour. With his death, the extreme-right music scene collapsed into infighting and factionalism, with each camp attempting to lay claim to Donaldson's legacy. The neo-Nazi organisation Combat 18 quickly set up ISD Records in order to stake its claim, although violent feuds soon destroyed any possibility of further unity. As of today, there are a number of websites trading on the Blood & Honour name and which denounce one another as traitors; for instance, <http://www.bloodandhonour.com/> carries a statement calling itself the "legitimate Blood &

Honour Movement” while dismissing <http://www.bloodandhonour.org/> as “wankers masquerading as Blood & Honour.”<sup>38</sup>

The consistent lauding of Donaldson made him more significant in death than he was in life; he became the touchstone of the entire scene, and was viewed as a prophet on a par with the Nazis. No Remorse were quick to record their tribute, ‘Farewell Ian Stuart’ (*We Play For You*, joint release with Svastika, Nordland Records, 1994):

So farewell to a comrade, and farewell to a friend;  
You did your best, you shone above the rest, you were a white man until the end;  
Farewell Ian Stuart, a man we held so high;  
You will live forever, because heroes, heroes never die.

This hagiography is reminiscent of Skrewdriver’s own tribute to Rudolf Hess: both figures are lauded for staying true to the cause until the end and for leaving a legacy which will continue after their death.

The elevation of Donaldson to heroic status was, before very long, inflected with martyrdom, an example of the conspiratorial predilection of the extreme right explored in Chapter Two. Most commonly, it is declared that Donaldson was murdered by the British Secret Service. Combat 18 distributed a leaflet claiming as much, while a biographer claimed that the evidence to support this claim included, among other things, the fact that “the date of the ‘accident’ coincided precisely to the 1939 Nazi law forbidding jews from owning a wireless and listening to music on the radio. Retorsion [sic] served ice cold by the Diaspora.”<sup>39</sup>

The same source also stated that Donaldson once informed Combat 18 members he believed he was going to be killed. This concern had evidently been on Donaldson’s mind for some years, given the contemplation of his mortality on 1989’s ‘Suddenly’ (*Warlord*, Rock-O-Rama):

One day if suddenly, I’m forced to take my leave;  
Will you still carry on, with the things that we believe?

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<sup>38</sup> Accessed 2 Feb 2012. For a history of these schisms until c.1997, see Nick Lowles and Steve Silver (eds.), *White Noise: inside the international nazi skinhead scene*, London: Searchlight, 1998.

<sup>39</sup> *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004, V. <http://www.skrewdriver.org/diamond.html>.

One day if suddenly, they take my life away;  
Will you still be fighting to win a bright new day?

Donaldson's concerns seem quite reasonable given the dangers which surround the scene, but since his death this song has solidified his status as martyr and prophet, aware of his own coming death and concerned for the cause he would leave behind.

If Donaldson's death engendered a mythic figure from within the music scene itself, his music still provides the extreme-right music industry with most of its momentum. Skrewdriver are even now the most popular, and prominent, band on a variety of websites, and the most widely discussed on messageboards. As well as their own sales, Skrewdriver left a wealth of material which other musicians have covered extensively; one of the Blood & Honour websites includes a substantial list of these acts and the songs they chose.<sup>40</sup> The most significant of these covers are those recorded by the Swedish singer Saga who—having started as the singer for the metal band Symphony of Sorrow—gained popularity with her albums *My Tribute to Skrewdriver* (three volumes, Midgård Records, 2000, 2000 and 2002).

The elevation of Donaldson is part of a process by which contemporary extreme-right activists are granted the same status as their forebears; set as the rightful heirs of the Vikings or Nazis, with the same moral justification. The above-cited (in *The lure of the Vikings*) 'See You In Valhalla' by No Remorse also includes the Nazis:

Fresh faced man engaged in war;  
With the fight and the courage, the fight of Thor;  
Out to defend the Fatherland;  
From those invading - alien man;  
The time has come to leave this place;  
He fought and died for the love of his race;  
Gun in hand, the soldier fell.

As well as skinheads:

Fighting those with flag of red;  
Among the crowd, a true skinhead;  
Fists of steel, heart of gold;  
A man so loyal and a man so bold.

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.bloodandhonourworldwide.co.uk/isd/tributes.html>, n.d., accessed 14 May 2012.



Fig. 6: No Remorse's *This Time the World*, *Rebelles Européens*, 1988.

The association in this song is also evident in the album artwork of No Remorse's *This Time the World* (Rebelles Européens, 1988, Fig. 6), which shows three figures: a warrior (perhaps Viking), an SS soldier armed with a machine gun, and a skinhead wearing a No Remorse shirt. Each is imbued with the same integrity and virtue through their common cause, each is

presented as part of the same continuum in European history.

As political parties of the extreme right have endeavoured to increase their electoral potential, they have sought to dissociate themselves from neo-Nazi stereotypes. Various measures have addressed this, including banning uniforms; revising manifestos; and attempting to create a viable replacement music culture. While the inspirations may not be the same (Hitler is hardly an influence many contemporary political parties would care to admit), the process is similar: placing current activists in a historical canon. BNP artist Joey Smith's 'English Pride' (*Not Just About the Music*, Great White Records, 2008) links together Arthurian legend, Admiral Nelson and the two World Wars into an undying seam of patriotism:

I was there, when our land began;  
I was the sword Excalibur held in King Arthur's Hand;  
Yes I was there, since St George was young;  
I was the horse he rode on when he slayed the dragon.

...

In 1805 I was on Nelson's boat;

...

In World War One I was in the trench with them;

...

In World War Two I kept our troops going;  
I helped them every mile, 'til they reached Berlin;  
Follow me, you know you should;  
I'm the voice that burns inside you;  
And I run through your blood;  
You know it's right, I can feel it inside;  
I will never die because I am English pride!

Here, Arthurian myth is cited alongside historically verifiable—albeit romanticised—events; myth is used to provide a context and a continuum for contemporary struggles, while typifying an everlasting innate Englishness. The use of myth and symbols by the BNP seeks to distance the party from the unappealing face of extreme-right politics, while simultaneously attempting to establish the BNP as the authentic inheritors of the nation's history and mythic tradition.

### **Appropriating Fantasy**

While the appropriation of myth serves the function of portraying the extreme right as the inheritors of national cultural heritage (as in the case of the BNP and Arthurian legend), or as a symbol of international unity (as in the case of the Vikings or Nazis), it also functions via analogy, something which can be seen from similar strategies of appropriation in works of fantasy. An encapsulation of this understanding can be found in a review published in *Resistance* magazine of the second of Peter Jackson's film adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy:

[T]his film has plenty to say to white racials. Obviously, as a mainstream film, there are no overt racist themes, but the film contains subtle morals—the struggle between Good and Evil, the naturalness of a folk-centered community, among others—morals that we should be able to identify immediately and should recognize as being fundamental to all our activities, political or otherwise.<sup>41</sup>

The review goes on to claim that

The most prominent racial overtones of the film occur during the battle at Helms Deep. As the camera scanned the faces of the men and elves on the ramparts, I saw only White faces—and it struck me that this is how all crowds

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<sup>41</sup> Hans Immelman, 'The Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers, Movie Review', *Resistance*, Iss.21, Spring/Summer 2003, p.22.

should look. Imagine a flat-faced oriental, a hook-nosed Jew, or a bubble-lipped African standing shoulder to shoulder in those ranks...it wouldn't look right.<sup>42</sup>

This passage, along with other parts of the review, make clear the reviewer's opinion that the white race represents that which is true and beautiful in the world, contrasted with other races who are characterised by physical defects. It is unclear whether the writer is stating that non-whites wouldn't look right merely aesthetically or because of the faux-Middle Ages setting of the film, but there is also the possibility that the writer would view as fraudulent any race other than whites playing the role of proud, warrior people.

Jackson's later adaptations of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* are much less favourably received, particularly for his inclusion of non-white extras as humans in crowd scenes, which one writer describes as "an insult to the taste and intelligence of its [the film's] audience."<sup>43</sup> A forum dedicated to this "controversy" on Stormfront reveals that many contributors view Tolkien's work as part of white cultural heritage, a heritage which is being corrupted by Hollywood, with one comment blaming "Jews [who are] trying to erase white existence on earth by wiping us out and our history."<sup>44</sup> The casting of black British actor Idris Elba as the Norse God Heimdall in the *Thor* film franchise was met with similar disgust,<sup>45</sup> indicating the sense of ownership the extreme right feel over myth and fantasy, and how racialised their conception of it is.

Reviews of the other *Lord of the Rings* films appeared in *Resistance*, with one revealing the appeal of analogy:

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>43</sup> Trevor Lynch, 'The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug', *Counter-Currents Publishing*, 16 Dec 2013, <http://www.counter-currents.com/2013/12/the-hobbit-the-desolation-of-smaug/>, accessed 19 Dec 2013.

<sup>44</sup> 'Non White in new hobbit film', *Stormfront*, created 4 Dec 2013, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1009355-4/>, accessed 19 Dec 2013.

<sup>45</sup> See the *Stormfront* forums: 'Asgardian Heimdall to be played by a black man...', created 20 Nov 2009, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t659175/>; 'A black playing Heimdall????', created 17 Apr 2010, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t700889/>; 'Introducing Heimdall.....The Whitest of Nordic Gods', created 28 Apr 2010, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t703651/>; 'Boycott Thor', created 18 Dec 2010, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t765403/>; all accessed 19 Dec 2013.

The characters in the film, though overshadowed by the magnitude of the story, make sense to White racialists. The bad guys—like those of today—seem to hold all the cards. The good guys—like those of today—persist against overwhelming odds. They exhibit the traditional White virtues of honesty, loyalty, and bravery; they resist temptation, make the best of unfavourable conditions, and carry out their tasks despite fear.<sup>46</sup>

Not only are their heroes seen as embodying characteristics of the white race, these tales also demonstrate the triumph of virtue despite improbable odds, potentially providing solace to those who are disillusioned over the difficulty the extreme right often have in advancing their cause.

Extreme-right interest in Tolkien did not begin with the success of Jackson's adaptations. There is a whole section dedicated to fantasy on *Stormfront*, particularly *Lord of the Rings*,<sup>47</sup> while the BNP have advocated the books to their members.<sup>48</sup> Significant figures in the extreme right have revealed their liking for Tolkien, such as in this interview with Ian Stuart Donaldson, in which he reveals not only his fondness for Tolkien, but also his own writing on a fantasy theme, with a fairly obvious link to his own political beliefs:

[Donaldson:] I reckon that my favourite author has got to be Tolkien, The Lord Of The Rings is the best book I've ever read, I've read it over ten times.  
[Interviewer:] What about the fantasy book that you once wrote?  
[Donaldson:] I've lent it to so many different people that I can't get it back, so I can't write it out again. Unless I re-wrote it all, but I can't even remember most of it. It was basically a fantasy story about a land that was being invaded, all of the tribes fought against each other, but in the end they all united to fight the invaders. I was hoping to publish it one day, but I lent it out to so many people that I've lost track of where it is. We could even have done a concept LP to go with it. The book was called The New Dawn.<sup>49</sup>

It is difficult to gauge whether Donaldson's interest in fantasy had any notable influence on Skrewdriver's music, but it did contribute to album titles; *Hail the New Dawn* (Rock-O-Rama, 1984) is self-referential, while it is suggested that *White Rider*

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<sup>46</sup> Hans Immelman, 'Review of The Lord of the Rings, Part I of III: The Fellowship of the Ring', *Resistance*, Iss.18, Spring 2002, p.10.

<sup>47</sup> 'High Fantasy and the Lord of the Rings', *Stormfront*, n.d., <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/f63/>, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>48</sup> David Doughan, 'Did Tolkien Have a Racist Message?', *The Sunday Times*, 22 Dec 2002, <http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/article213336.ece>, accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>49</sup> 'Ian Stuart: Voice of the Resistance', *Blood & Honour* (UK), n.iss.no., n.d. (2004?), p.19.

(Rock-O-Rama, 1987) was taken from one of the names for the character Gandalf in *Lord of the Rings*.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

In the sphere of the extreme right, all myths are political. By contextualising old myths and creating new ones, the extreme right seek to insert their ideology into mainstream history, in order to influence a nation's view of itself. In seeking to provide some precedence in cultural heritage, the use of myths tries to legitimise extreme-right ideology, while at the same time seeking to label those who oppose that ideology as enemies of the nation. This approach allows the extreme right to present their exclusionary principles in an ostensibly non-racialised way, arguing that distinctive "indigenous" culture is threatened by multiculturalism.

Beyond these national concerns, myth also serves an international function; by providing a projection of a golden age, and a heritage apparently shared by all Nordic Europeans, examples like the Vikings help to overcome the lack of cultural unity among Western European nations, particularly in terms of religion and language. This lack of unity also might explain why it took so long for contemporary extreme-right political movements to distance themselves from the rhetoric of white supremacy, since race was one of the few things the peoples of these nations (thought they) had in common. As well as this cultural function, myth often serves as a model for activism, an activism very much associated with belligerence due to the canons that the extreme right draw on. The warriors of the past are presented as inspirational examples for the "warriors" of today; frequently, as in the case of No Remorse's 'See You In Valhalla' and Joey Smith's 'English Pride', the warriors of the past are presented as the forebears of contemporary activists, fighting for a common cause.

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<sup>50</sup> *Diamond In The Dust: The Ian Stuart Biography*, 2004, IV. <http://www.skrewdriver.org/diamond.html>.



At times, the willingness of the extreme right to claim—and mythologise—any white, successful and romantic warrior for their cause borders on the comic. As Kirsten Dyck notes, the appropriation of William Wallace by the band Brutal Attack ('In the Hearts of Highland Men', *When Odin Calls*, Destiny Records, 1998) can seem jarring, given that No Remorse's Englishness would conflict with Wallace's brand of Scottish nationalism. Moreover, the band's claim that "William Wallace, you did not die in vain" is intended to be understood as a reference to the white supremacist cause, a rather tenuous link given that Wallace was fighting other white people.<sup>51</sup> Consider, for example, the following extract from a biography of Wallace in *Resistance*, part of the series "White Men of Whom we are Proud":

Scotland, which gave birth to the men of the Scottish Clans, who in the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320 gave expression to the uniqueness and grandeur of the Aryan soul—witnessed in so many episodes of our glorious Racial heritage—that "It is not for glory, nor riches, nor honor [sic] that we fight, but for freedom alone, which no man of worth yields up, but with his life." It is also the country that gave birth to a true son of the race, William Wallace, warrior, patriot, and guardian of Scotland, whose name and legend has been passed on down through the centuries, celebrated in song, poem, and story, and whose fame will endure as long as our race survives.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, Wallace is being positioned as a White hero, rather than simply a Scottish one. Nothing in the accompanying biography—other than vague references to patriotism and foreign invaders—justifies this racial depiction of Wallace, particularly in light of the fact that he is fighting and being oppressed by other "Aryans."

Wallace is, however, an appealing figure for many reasons, some of which are cited in the article:

For White Racialists today, in a world that seeks the extinction of our kindred, it is easy to identify with the life story of William Wallace: the belief in an idea worth dying for; the division of our people; the traitors within our ranks; the hardship in trying to get our race to fight back when so many preach that we must give into [sic] "the inevitable"; the powerful weaponry of our enemies that

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<sup>51</sup> Kirsten Dyck, 'Race and Nation in White-Power Music', PhD Thesis, Washington State University, 2012, pp.167-168.

<sup>52</sup> James MacGregor, 'William Wallace: Warrior, Patriot, Guardian', *Resistance*, Iss.8 1997, p.43.

use every medium possible to try to get our people to follow the path of Racial miscegenation and suicide.<sup>53</sup>

Most obviously, Wallace was a nationalist, a cause embedded within extreme-right thought, albeit not necessarily equivalent to racial nationalism. Wallace fought a larger enemy, and thus great odds, with some success, serving as an inspirational model to extreme-right supporters facing similar odds. Wallace's death, his martyrdom at the hands of the enemy, feeds into extreme-right appreciation of those who make deep personal sacrifices for their cause.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Wallace's use of violence to further his cause legitimises the extreme-right's own preoccupation with violence and the warrior archetype. This depiction of Wallace reduces him to a force of good in the struggle against evil, a common dichotomy presented in extreme-right narratives of history and myth. The appropriation of fantasy often entails a similar depiction of a Manichaean struggle between good and evil; the characteristics of perceived non-white races in fantasy stories—notably the Orcs in *Lord of the Rings*—are mapped on to the belief in differences between races in extreme-right ideology, just as historical events are depicted in terms of good and evil.

The use of fantasy and myth—and the related appropriation and mythologisation of historical figures and events—serves a variety of functions. It provides a sense of continuity, in which extreme-right struggles are set in a historical context alongside mythic and historical narratives. The setting of this continuum also bestows a sense of legitimacy, casting the extreme right as the successors of national heroes and symbols. Myth is often seen in the context of analogy, as providing an example of how to act to contemporary supporters. This example is most commonly depicted through violence and warrior status, not only feeding into the characterisation of extreme-right politics as a struggle, but complementing the voices which proclaim that actual conflict is an inevitability of ethnic mixing.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>54</sup> Dyck, 'Race and Nation in White-Power Music', p.168.

Even so, the mythic subjects drawn upon, and their interpretation, demonstrate a narrow perspective. The Vikings are favoured, but perceived in a narrow manner as a warrior race (with only the warrior gods Odin and Thor of interest), neglecting their nuances as immigrants, explorers, traders and farmers, as well as the fact that they mainly engaged in conflict with other “white” peoples. This narrow focus, along with its homogeneous interpretation, make clear that the extreme right’s engagement with myth is essentially superficial and primarily ideologically motivated.

## Chapter Seven:

**“And for those of you who don’t like metal...”:**

**The softer side of extreme-right music**

*“Besides striving to create the best possible product we can, we also must work to improve the image of the resistance music scene, particularly in the eyes of young Whites. The time for us to be isolationists in society is over. We need to be inclusive rather than exclusive; the many genres of pro-White music now available allow us to reach out to a much wider demographic than just those Whites attracted to the skinhead subculture.”*

**Erich Gliebe, Editorial, *Resistance*, Iss.26 Summer 2006, p.2.**

*“We try to keep our lyrics fairly approachable for people that may not pay a lot of attention to racial issues in order to try and persuade them to think about things. Once they’re on side they can listen to groups with real hardcore lyrics.”*

**“Samuel,” White Power Musician,  
quoted in Simi and Futrell, *American Swastika*, 2010, p.64.**

For much of its existence, extreme-right music has circulated in legally questionable ways, facing difficulties not only in avoiding anti-fascist opposition, but also at times having to contend with the law, particularly hate speech legislation. While some musicians, producers and distributors have developed various tactics to circumvent such legislation, others have turned to less explicit and confrontational musical styles and lyrics. This “softer” side of extreme-right music is valued not only for its ability to circulate more freely, but also because its backers believe it will appeal to a broader audience, who may be alienated by more explicit ideological pronouncements early on in their process of radicalisation, or who feel hostility towards the more established extreme-right genres.

As explored in Chapter One, legislation has at best succeeded in limiting the circulation of extreme-right music, rather than stopping it; those who are determined to break the law still do so, and distribution has become easier for illegal music thanks to the Internet and peer-to-peer file sharing. Legislation is therefore not the only factor in the softening process: it is notable that in European countries, the extreme right have attempted to advance through political means; as discussed in Chapter One, the two-party system of the United States largely precludes this. Therefore, the extreme right in the USA have largely advocated revolution as the way to install the desired regime, while the softening of music in Europe reflects the modernising processes of the political parties. Softer music is therefore used by political parties and movements who do not wish to associate themselves with the negative reputation of violent neo-Nazism, but it is also valued by more radical extreme-right movements, where it is intended to act as a “gateway” for new and potential recruits before they graduate on to more explicit material.

This chapter looks at the various “softening” strategies that have been adopted. Two core issues lie at the heart of this softening: first, the extreme right are attempting to discard their reputation as a fringe group by proving their legitimacy and distancing themselves from illegal activities; second, there is a recognition that a broad range of tastes and ideologies are to be found under the extreme-right

umbrella, and that a monocultural extreme right will not satisfy everyone—in short, softening entails a pluralistic approach to extreme-right identity. As such, this chapter provides a counterpart to Chapter Five, which focuses mainly on explicit, “hardcore” material; the material here suggests a strand of extreme-right strategy which seeks to engage in democratic political processes, while projecting a more inclusive image in an attempt to appeal to a broader support base.

### **Softening Strategies**

Lawrence Lessig uses the term “ambiguation” to refer to the blurring of meaning for a certain purpose, undermining the negative connotations of an act or symbol by giving it a second, apparently more positive meaning. Lessig cites the example of citizens in occupied Denmark who took to wearing a yellow star, which the Nazi occupiers required to be worn by all Jews. This action ambiguated the meaning of the yellow star, which could now be seen as a symbol of Jewishness or Danish solidarity with them.<sup>1</sup> I have drawn on Lessig’s concept here, but while there are many examples from the extreme right which could be described in terms of “ambiguation,” I will use the term “softening.” The main reason for this distinction is that softening does not necessarily entail ambiguation. For while softening can often take the form of subversion—such as the spread of extreme-right materials which are not necessarily easily identifiable as such—there are also instances of overt and unambiguous ideology being expressed in supposedly more mainstream material.

From the various examples in this chapter, it is possible to identify four particular softening strategies. The first strategy is the softening of image. The extreme-right stereotype of a racist and violent skinhead wearing Doc Martens and a bomber jacket, perhaps with a swastika tattoo, is not one that is likely to appeal to voters. Instead, modernised parties and movements often portray themselves as ordinary folk who are just saying what everyone is thinking. In addition, extreme-

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Lessig, ‘The Regulation of Social Meaning’ in *The University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol.62 No.3, Summer 1995, pp.1,010-1,011.

right supporters “camouflage” themselves “to avoid confrontations they cannot win. ... In most everyday settings, Aryans are invisible.”<sup>2</sup>

The second strategy is the softening of genre. Again, the stereotype of extreme-right music is Oi!, rock and metal, usually confrontational styles, which feed into the reputation for violence. The modernisers espouse more accessible genres, such as folk, country and pop, while there has always been a seam of extreme-right thought which advocates classical music as the highest expression of white culture. The use of more mainstream genres is often accompanied by the belief that this will result in extreme-right music reaching a wider audience.

The third strategy is the softening of lyrics. Typical extreme-right lyrical tropes include violence, anti-Semitism, explicit racism, homophobia and sexism. The modernisers’ approach is to focus on ideals of heritage, tradition, cultural distinctiveness and national pride. Often, this entails a move away from racial ideology to a nationally-specific focus.

The fourth strategy is the appropriation of cultural heritage and history, laying claim to significant symbolism and events in the national consciousness and claiming them as attuned to or endorsements of extreme-right policy. The BNP, examined in detail below, provide many examples of this, including selling music by Vera Lynn and the appropriation of the sense of Britishness associated with the wartime spirit. This was complemented by the claim that if Winston Churchill were alive today he would vote BNP, as well as the use of British wartime imagery on campaign material. This claiming of established cultural symbols or works for racial ideology is also commonplace beyond the BNP; examples include the recasting of *Lord of the Rings* as a racial parable, and the availability of the famous German singer Heino on the catalogue of Resistance Records.

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<sup>2</sup> Pete Simi and Robert Futrell. *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement's Hidden Spaces of Hate*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010, p.4.

### **Softer Success: Ultima Thule**

The softening strategies outlined above very rarely exist in isolation; the most successful extreme-right band—certainly in terms of mainstream sales—combined each of these strategies in their music. Ultima Thule experienced mainstream success before media pressure compelled their label to rescind their contract; as the band's response shows (see Chapter One), Ultima Thule rejected their characterisation as racist, despite their previous association with Bevara Sverige Svenskt. With this history of activity within racist circles, the tone of the band's rejection shows an attempt to ambiguate the concept of patriotism: national pride becomes incompatible with multi-culturalism, while at the same time they ambiguate the concept of racism by implying that amongst racism's victims are the indigenous Swedes.

In regard to the lyrics themselves, Ultima Thule had some justification in complaining when their music was labelled racist. In comparison to the work of their contemporaries, which often contained references to Nazism as well as derogatory racial slurs, there is nothing specifically objectionable. Even on their first release, funded by Bevara Sverige Svenskt, the lyrics did nothing more than express a rather crude patriotism, referring to historical traits of the nation and the distinctive features of its landscape.<sup>3</sup> This was the lyrical trend that continued in their mainstream works, historical references often focusing on the time of the Napoleonic campaigns, when Sweden was an influential power.<sup>4</sup>

While Ultima Thule were never guilty of lyrics that were likely to see them in court, theirs was a very specific form of patriotism. The narrative of their albums linked modern Swedes to historical struggles, and often emphasised the point that the band were willing to “fight”, even to “take up arms”, for Sweden. The constant identification with the natural features of Sweden make this a very exclusionary form of patriotism; it is implied that incomers will simply not have the same affinity with

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ultima Thule, ‘Sverige, Sverige Fosterland’, *Sverige Sverige Fosterland*, Sveamål Records, 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ultima Thule, ‘Poltava’, *För Fäderneslandet*, Ultima Thule Records, 1992.



the country as the indigenous population. This process attempts to ambiguate patriotism, by implying that patriotism necessitates racism to preserve the true nature of national identity. It would seem that Ultima Thule have been partially successful in this regard, at least in associating patriotism with racism. Among the national signifiers of Sweden, they frequently make use of the flag (cf. *Vikingabalk*, 1993) and Viking symbolism (cf. *För Fäderneslandet*, 1992) in their album art and promotional material. This itself is not without racist associations. For instance, Ben Marlene, a Swedish singer in the 1980s later to work in the music publishing industry, states that the Swedish flag is mainly carried by “skinheads and racists.”<sup>5</sup> The use of Viking culture and symbolism is also commonplace in the extreme-right, as Chapter Six shows; in the face of immigration, and principally the growth of Islam, the mythology surrounding the Vikings provides a model for the resistance, both in the assertion of cultural distinctiveness and in trying to justify the use of violence.



Fig. 7: Contrasting covers of Dirlewanger's *Rocking for the Golden Race* (*Rebelles Européens*, 1989) and Ultima Thule's *Vikingabalk* (Ultima Thule Records, 1993).

The case of Ultima Thule demonstrates how softening can also involve ambiguation; by adopting national signifiers such as the Swedish flag, and rejecting

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks: Popular music, identity and place*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p.125.

traditional symbols of the extreme right, Ultima Thule positioned themselves as legitimate custodians of national character rather than extremists. Even if this was not deemed credible by their critics, the uncertainty could potentially affect the appropriated material, altering its meaning and changing its use in other contexts. Ultima Thule therefore embody a hugely successful overlap between softening and ambiguation; the use of more mainstream genres, lyrics and symbols allowed the band to deny, and even turn back, accusations of racism, despite their history of association with overtly racist causes and bands.

### **A History of Softening: The Case of the BNP**

The BNP's roots in the NF meant they advocated the same policies of ending immigration and forcing repatriation of foreigners already in the UK, as well as using the same tactics of street marches as a show of strength. While senior figures in the NF did not always hold a high opinion of skinheads and the associated music scene, the party had played a crucial role in the establishment of Rock Against Communism and extreme-right music in Britain more generally, so music was always likely to be an important component for the BNP as well.

Officially, the BNP looked down on popular music, instead advocating classical music and high culture in the party magazine. This generally took the form of praising canonic composers such as Wagner and Verdi, or English composers—such as John Ireland—who had apparently been neglected because of their nationalism.<sup>6</sup> As well as advocating classical music, the early BNP saw popular music as part of a conspiracy to destroy the white race (see Chapter Two). Despite this hostility, the BNP couldn't ignore the economic benefits of Rock Against Communism. Although it didn't have any official links with Blood & Honour, the party's progress was regularly and favourably featured in Blood & Honour magazine,

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Frampton, 'The Forgotten Composer', *Spearhead*, No.299, Jan 1994, p.13.

while bands played benefit concerts for the BNP. The products of skinhead bands were also advertised in the party magazine, *Spearhead*.

This changed in 1999 when Nick Griffin took control of the BNP. Griffin engaged in the process of “modernising” the party, bringing it into line with successful European parties like Le Pen’s Front National. As well as softening party policies and distancing the BNP from violent strategies and tactics, this involved altering the party’s relationship with music.

Before he became party leader, Griffin had revealed to undercover journalists in 1997 his grand plans for music within a broader strategy. He wanted to set up a British CD production company similar to Resistance in the United States and Nordland in Sweden. Griffin also hoped to establish ‘Radio White Europe’ to be broadcast from transmitters in Eastern Europe. He outlined the plans for this radio network with different broadcasts to appeal to distinct audiences. As well as hoping to appeal to a more “cultured” audience through different genres, Griffin saw his plan as a way of exploiting the financial potential of the skinhead market while distancing the party from them. He said:

I don’t know if your skinheads are scum, a lot of ours are, they’re lower than low, they really are the pits.... The crucial thing is, if it can be done, it would create a large amount of money. It would keep happy and involved and focused the group of people who we don’t want close to us for electoral reasons, skinheads with big boots.<sup>7</sup>

Despite their distaste for the skinheads and claims that they were not a neo-Nazi party, the BNP were still selling CDs with lyrics like “We’re national socialist skinheads and we hail to the Führer” in order to raise funds for their election campaigning.<sup>8</sup> From this, and Griffin’s comments about keeping skinheads “happy,” it seems that skinheads were viewed as financially indispensable, but their negative image was something the party did not want to be associated with.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>8</sup> *Searchlight*, No.283 Jan 1999, p.8.

One of Griffin's first actions as party leader was to establish an annual Red White and Blue festival, apparently based on a similar event held by the French Front National. This was advertised as a family occasion of wholesome activities, and one of its main features was music. The first festival in 2001 was described in the BNP magazine in very glowing terms: "Some will treasure most the way you could have heard a pin drop between the verses of the Welsh national anthem as sung by two little girls. Others will remember above all the warm comradeship when the whole audience joined in the singing of traditional British folk songs on the Saturday evening."<sup>9</sup> It was described a little differently by an undercover journalist, who reported that the event was headlined by Stigger, known for his *Patriotic Ballads* collaborations with Ian Stuart Donaldson and a former member of Oi! bands Skrewdriver and Warlord; and that at the end of the night, the crowd gathered in the beer tent and listened to SS marching songs.<sup>10</sup>

By the 2003 festival, the attendance was over 1,000 and some of the audience were ejected for making Nazi salutes. It was described in the BNP magazine as follows:

The numbers involved were not large—not much more than a handful—have been identified and will not be attending again. The party intends that our family festival remains exactly that and will be fixed for next year.... Nick Griffin ended his speech to a long standing ovation concluding with everyone singing Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup>

By this point the BNP were explicitly disassociating themselves from any neo-Nazism, and encouraging the view that they were representing the ordinary, decent and hard-working people.

In 2005 the party record label released its first album, *Time to Make a Stand* (Great White Records), a mixture of folk song covers and new material, mainly using acoustic guitars. Lyrics address themes such as white victims of murder, and the inevitable victory of nationalism. While many of the songs are somewhat ambiguous

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<sup>9</sup> *Identity*, No.16 Dec 2001, p.12.

<sup>10</sup> *Searchlight*, No.315 Sep 2001, p.8.

<sup>11</sup> *Identity*, No.36 Sep 2003, pp.10-11.

in their subject matter, there is still a fairly explicit example of xenophobia in ‘The Menace’—with lyrics and backing vocals by Nick Griffin—even if the “menace ... can’t be named”:

You’ve heard about the Yardies;  
Drugs and guns from overseas;  
You’ve heard about the Triads;  
And all their pimps and all their thieves;  
But there’s another menace;  
From far away it came;  
You know exactly who I mean;  
And why they can’t be named.  
[chorus]  
Strutting down our streets;  
With baseball bats and clubs;  
Beating up our old men;  
And burning down our pubs;  
A shower of foreign traitors;  
Who want to take our land;  
And if you want to stop them;  
You must come and lend a hand.

Clearly, this song is hardly inoffensive; indeed, a BNP review of the album describes it as “a joy to listen to, simply for it being SO politically-incorrect.”<sup>12</sup> Even so, ‘The Menace’ is an example of a softer material, particularly in that it is about supposed cultural incompatibility rather than racial supremacy.

As well as releasing their own material associated with folk culture, the BNP attempted to identify the music of mainstream folk musicians with their ideology. As detailed in Chapter Three (pp.158-9), Nick Griffin has made no secret of his preference for folk, and the BNP actively encourage members to become involved with local events that can be grouped under the folk banner. These activities actually led to the creation of Folk Against Fascism, an organisation which mobilised huge opposition to the BNP and their ideology. The musicians that Griffin cited also distanced themselves from the party.

*West Wind* (Great White Records, 2007) still displays folk influences, but consists entirely of new compositions with lyrics by Nick Griffin. It is much more dependent on electric guitars than its predecessor, being more of a soft-rock album.

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<sup>12</sup> *Identity*, No.60 Nov 2005, pp.18-19.

Again, the lyrics avoid outright racism or any of the features associated with most extreme-right music, instead focusing on apparent racism against whites and the betrayal of the indigenous population by elites (see Chapter Four).

The last major release on Great White Records—before it went bankrupt for the second time—was a pop album by Joey Smith, *Not Just About the Music* (2008). Smith wrote in the sleeve notes: “As far as I am aware this is the first of its type. A nationalist pop album! So I hope it reaches a new audience that conventional nationalist albums have not.” Nick Griffin also had high hopes for the release, writing:

Joe’s album will be a welcome departure for Great White, as it’s very much Britpop, a really “young” sound different to the folk/folk rock/country sound on the early CDs [on Great White Records]. Personally... I’m “into” traditional folk and country music in a big way. But I’m also very well aware that 99.7% of youngsters are not, and that it’s them that we need to reach out to with music more than anybody else.<sup>13</sup>

The lyrics hardly reflect the content of conventional pop music, addressing such issues as fighting American wars, race-mixing and freeing the land. In the song ‘Never Wanna Leave’, Smith proclaims his national identity and pride in belonging to the national community, while also asserting his ownership over what constitutes this identity:

I went to the beach, lazed on the sand, sun in my face;  
I know I’m glad to be part of England, what a place!  
[chorus]  
It’s my home, don’t try to change it;  
Leave it as it is, don’t rearrange it;  
It is my right!  
On my own there’s always friends here [sic.];  
One’s that I love, people that I hold dear;  
We’ll fight the good fight!

In this song, Smith declares that national identity is static and absolute, that it is under threat, and implies that the BNP are the true representatives of national identity and the only hope for its preservation.

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<sup>13</sup> Nick Griffin, ‘Blackpool, Oxford and a studio visit’, *Chairman’s Column*, 3 Dec 2007, <http://chairmans-column.blogspot.com/>, accessed 12 Aug 2010.

These examples show a deliberate strategy undertaken by the BNP to associate themselves with an existing musical culture, folk, both in appropriating existing traditions and in using existing and newly composed material in their albums. The release of a pop album, and the relative ambiguity of the lyrics, demonstrate a desire not only to appeal to new audiences, but to dissociate from what has been the financial foundation of the extreme-right music scene, the skinhead subculture. These musical examples are paralleled by the “modernisation” process which has been undertaken by many extreme-right parties and movements, particularly in western Europe, which has seen a shift away from overt and explicit racism, towards a narrative of cultural distinctiveness and the oppression of the “indigenous” population.

### The “Softer” Sex

One of the potential marketing techniques that is often described as untapped by the extreme right is the presence of women in the music scene. Extreme-right portrayals of women frequently present them as naturally docile and subservient (as well as hyper-sexualised), but a significant belief here is that female musicians will naturally appeal to other women more than the men who dominate the scene. There is also a belief that women are less likely to engender hostility from protestors and venues, as Cindy MacDonald, an American activist, writes:

The potential market for racist *women* music groups is larger than it is for men. *An all-female band* would have far less trouble in terms of anti-racist violence at gigs. All-male bands have problems. They are far more restricted in terms of clubs they can get into. That limits their audience. But with *women* artists, protestors would be a little less aggressive than they would be toward male musicians; also, concert goers might be curious at why women would be singing racist songs. It’s a good selling point—*women* racist musicians. It allows more potential concert goers because some *women* music fans are turned off by ultra-aggressive testosterone-laced performers. A racist *woman* singer would be an excellent role model which might attract women into our cause.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Les Back and Vron Ware, *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p.116.

MacDonald's theory that concert-goers would be curious about women singing this material raises another factor associated with women and extreme-right music: novelty. The overwhelmingly masculine nature of extreme-right music means most female musicians are treated as something of an oddity within the scene, a reaction which occasionally extends to the mainstream.

Perhaps the most famous example of extreme-right novelty—not only because of sex but also age—is the twin duo Prussian Blue, who played white nationalist pop music between 2003 and 2007, between the ages of around 11 and 15. The duo were so unusual that they were featured in two British documentaries, in 2003 and 2007,<sup>15</sup> and gained much media attention. In one of the documentaries, the presenter of a radio show who has just interviewed the girls talks about the confusion that results from hearing this ideology coming from such an unexpected source:

If they were ugly with gnarly teeth and warts on their faces, people would be going “You’re a racist!” But they’re beautiful as they’re saying these words, y’know, and they’re agreeable as they’re saying these words, and people go “What? Was that racist or not? I can’t tell!”<sup>16</sup>

The radio presenter is overstating somewhat; Prussian Blue gained such notoriety *because* of the explicitness of their message, disseminated through their lyrics, interviews and merchandise. Although their message was uncompromising, the style of Prussian Blue's music was intended to appeal to a new audience. In an interview, the twins said that they listened to mostly white power music when they were young, but that they were now listening to: “mainstream rock like Greenday [sic] and Avril Lavigne to get an idea about what kinds of sounds the kids like. If we get them to like our music and our sound we can then get them to listen to our message.”<sup>17</sup>

As well as using different genres to spread their message, Prussian Blue promoted a different image for white nationalism, away from the stereotypical skinhead. Not only did the girls project an image of childhood innocence, but they

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<sup>15</sup> *Louis and the Nazis*, Dir. Louis Theroux, 21 Dec 2003, BBC 2; *Nazi Pop Twins*, Dir. James Quinn, 19 Jul 2007, Channel 4 (UK).

<sup>16</sup> *Nazi Pop Twins*.

<sup>17</sup> *Blood & Honour* (Britain), Issue 33, pp.10-11



were seen to hold sexual capital which could be exploited in the future to appeal to male desire; they are described as “fantasy sweethearts” by David Lane,<sup>18</sup> and the girls’ mother recognised the sexual potential of the girls in appealing to white males:

What young man, red-blooded American boy, isn’t going to find two blonde twins, 16 years old, singing about white pride, pride in your race, very few are not going to find that very appealing.<sup>19</sup>

Like Prussian Blue, Saga is valued for the different image of the extreme right that she projects, and she is often represented and discussed in sexual terms. Saga was the singer in the band Symphony of Sorrow as well as a solo artist, and was featured on the cover of Issue 13 of *Resistance* magazine in 2000. One contributor to *Resistance* wrote that: “just having her in front of our camera helps our Cause. But, she is also quite good at interviews. She comes across as the girl-next-door, who also understands the dynamics of racial conflict.”<sup>20</sup> The novelty of Saga is suggested by her featuring in a 2005 documentary for the Discovery Channel called *Hate Rock*, with a quote from the programme reproduced approvingly in a *Stormfront* forum:

What makes me different is I think I am a lot more mainstream looking and that I am very much toned down compared to the other ones [musicians]. It’s not in your clothes, it’s not in the way that you dress, it’s not in your appearance, it’s what’s in your heart. It’s a lot more easier for the mainstream public to see themselves in me than it is to see themselves in a skin-girl. Personal experiences have made me feel the way I do, and most people do have the same beliefs that I do. It’s a bad thing to be labelled a racist, these days, and it’s such a bad thing that people would rather shut up than express what they feel. I am just trying to say that, I don’t want people that are not like me around me.<sup>21</sup>

As well as her appealing—and more conventional—image, Saga’s music is generally mainstream rock and ballad, again offering an alternative to the hard rock and metal of most extreme-right music. A lot of Saga’s music consists of cover versions of extreme-right bands, and her first three releases were tributes to Skrewdriver, but she often performs them in a different way: one blogger writes that “Saga makes

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<sup>18</sup> *Nazi Pop Twins*.

<sup>19</sup> *Louis and the Nazis*; at the time of this quote, the girls were 11.

<sup>20</sup> Shaun Walker, ‘The Growth of White Power Music’, *Resistance* Issue 26 Summer 2006, p.25.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Saga’, *Stormfront*, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t469898-4/>, created 16 Mar 2008, accessed 4 Aug 2012.

Skrewdriver accessible.”<sup>22</sup> Some of these covers retained the heavy guitar instrumentation of Skrewdriver but use significantly less distortion, while Saga’s vocals are higher in the mix and are less aggressive—or, to put it another way, less “shouty”—than Donaldson’s originals. Saga also makes use of the piano on some of these covers, an instrument which is exceedingly rare in extreme-right music, and which would become dominant on her later solo releases. Saga’s music has turned her into a relative superstar on the extreme right, popular with both fans of established Oi!-influenced styles and those who dislike the dominant styles of extreme-right music.

It is certainly not the case that women in the extreme-right scene exclusively play and sing softer styles and lyrics, just as it is not the case that there are no men playing less confrontational material. There are examples of men having great success with softer styles of lyrics, such as the hugely popular German balladeer Frank Rennie, or even Ian Stuart Donaldson’s folk albums. However, the few examples of women participating in the more confrontational styles of the extreme right, and their lack of success, may be indicative of barriers to the participation of women. Certainly, women can achieve success in extreme-right music—prominent examples being Saga and Prussian Blue—but generally only if they restrict themselves to “appropriate” genres.

It is clearly no coincidence that the most successful female musicians, and even the moderately successful ones, release music that is significantly “softer” than the pervasive hard rock style of much extreme-right music. Women tend to be restricted to the specific genres of folk or pop-rock, with much less use of amplification and distortion. Admittedly, there is a role for female vocalists within all-male metal bands (this is how Saga’s career began, as part of the band Symphony of Sorrow), but otherwise opportunities for women seem limited. Kirsten Döhring and Renate Feldmann, for example, note the lack of success of four mixed-gender

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew Hamilton, ‘Voice of Swedish Nationalism: Saga and Her Music’, *Counter-Currents Publishing*, 16 Sep 2011, <http://www.counter-currents.com/2011/09/saga-and-her-music/>, accessed 4 Aug 2012.

bands playing music associated with the skinhead subculture, particularly in comparison with Annett Moeck, who has achieved great success in a more “appropriate” genre.<sup>23</sup> These bands not only faced difficulties in releasing and generating interest in their music, but also had to contend with the attitudes of the extreme-right press characterising them as “Mädelband” (girlbands) and dismissing their music as proof that women “belong behind the stove and not behind the microphone.”<sup>24</sup> Clearly, these sentiments speak to a broader misogyny (as discussed in Chapter Five), but this misogyny is much more likely to surface when women are seen to be deviating from their proper place. Given this pressure to release music of a “softer” sort, it is little surprise that women form a significant component of the softer material produced by the extreme right.

### **The Softening Sell: Music for Youth**

Young people are particular targets of extreme-right music, and of extreme-right propaganda in general. For example, German former neo-Nazi Ingo Hasselbach says:

I liked to approach 14- to 16-year-olds after school.... I'd act a lot like an older brother; we'd go into the woods together and do things like Boy Scout exercises, building forts and making trails. I'd always slip in a bit of ideology against foreigners along the way, saying some racist things like how there are such big differences between the white and black races, for example. But only casually at first.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, former white power skinhead T.J. Leyden said, “Our motto was: ‘You do not want the weekend patriot, you want his son.’”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Kirsten Döhring and Renate Feldmann, ‘Frauen(bilder) in rechten Subkulturen: Ich weiß genau was ich will, halt nicht die Schnauze und bin still...’, in Christian Dornbusch and Jan Raabe (eds.). *RechtsRock: Bestandsaufnahme und Gegenstrategien*. Hamburg/Münster: Reihe antifaschistischer Texte/UNRAST-Verlag, 2002, pp.187-214.

<sup>24</sup> “Das Frauen hinter den Herd und nichts hinters Mikrophon gehören, beweist uns diese Veröffentlichung der ‘Band’ Wallküren!” Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.188.

<sup>25</sup> Ingo Hasselbach with Tom Reiss, *Führer-Ex: Memoirs of a Former Neo-Nazi*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1996, p.242.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Ugo Corte and Bob Edwards, ‘White Power music and the mobilization of racist social movements’, *Music and Arts in Action*, Vol.1, No.1 (2008), p.13.

Perhaps the most concentrated application of the marketing of softer music is in the targeting of youth through music, a practice which often uses softer materials, designed to be the first step on the road to radicalisation. Extreme-right music is seen as an excellent medium through which young people can be recruited to the cause, and this is often stated as a primary use of the music. Announcing the acquisition of Resistance Records for the National Alliance, William Pierce wrote to members:

As Resistance gains strength, that acquisition should add an increasing number of younger members, in the 18-25 age range, to our ranks.... Some of the themes of this White resistance music will be offensive to some members. Aside from the lyrics, the music itself will not appeal to many members. It is the type of music, however, which millions of White Americans are accustomed to.<sup>27</sup>

Similar sentiments are prominent in BNP leader Nick Griffin's assessment of Joey Smith's *Not Just About the Music* (see above).

As well as making music specifically intended for a youth audience, some extreme-right groups have created campaigns designed to disseminate it to them. In 2004, German extreme-right groups distributed a compilation of extreme-right music, *Anpassung ist Feigheit: Lieder aus dem Untergrund* (Adjustment is Cowardice: Songs from the Underground) near schools and youth centres, with the Office for the Protection of the Constitution of North Rhine-Westphalia reporting that 50,000 of these CDs were distributed nationwide.<sup>28</sup> This tactic was adopted by the NPD in the summer of that year, with the party having released at least nine albums to 2013 under the banner of "Projekt Schulhof" (Project Schoolyard), or alternatively and less frequently "Aktion Schulhof" (Operation Schoolyard). In her assessment of these releases, Chiara Pierobon discerns some main themes which are common to many of the songs included on these compilations:

In the songs, the German past is presented as a glorious time, characterised by peace, freedom, humanity, faithfulness and honour. Contrastingly, the present is described in negative terms: the system is portrayed as sick and tyrannical; the world is represented in a state of war from which the mass media benefit; Germany is described as divided due to the action of its enemies; and German

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted in *Searchlight*, No.295 Jan 2000, p.5.

<sup>28</sup> Chiara Pierobon, 'Rechtsrock: White Power Music in Germany', in Anton Shekhovtsov and Paul Jackson (eds.), *White Power Music: Scenes of Extreme-Right Cultural Resistance*, Ilford: Searchlight and RNM Publications, 2012, p.17.

values as perishing by drowning in their blood.... Capitalism and the Americanisation of society are addressed as alien forces that have caused the current state of degeneration and corruption characterising the country.... According to the songs included in the NPD music initiative, it is time to rebel, to stand up and make a noise. By invoking themes such as comradeship and solidarity, the artists call for protest, rebellion, and revenge from below.<sup>29</sup>

The consistency with which the NPD have produced and distributed these CDs implies their success as a venture, and this conclusion is lent force from attempts by others to emulate them. The independent Bavarian group Kameradschaftsbund Hochfranken and the AG Wiking branch in Wilhelmshaven produced their own schoolyard CDs (in 2006 and 2009 respectively), while so-called “Autonome Nationalisten” (autonomous nationalists) produced a CD-ROM entitled “Jugend in Bewegung—Schüler CD des nationalen Widerstands” (Youth on the Move—Student CD of the national resistance, c.2010). The format of the latter release—which was much stronger in tone than the NPD releases—allowed for not only music (in mp3 format) but also the inclusion of other media such as videos and images, also listing contact details for 126 extreme-right groups in Germany and a further 36 from the rest of Europe.<sup>30</sup>

The Projekt Schulhof strategy has also been employed outside Germany, such as *Perspektiven schaffen—Weg mit dem Alltagsgrau!*, the product of the Partei National Orientierter Schweizer (Party of Nationally Oriented Swiss).<sup>31</sup> In the United States in 2004, Panzerfaust Records prepared 100,000 copies of a compilation called *Project Schoolyard* aimed at youths between 13 and 19 years old.<sup>32</sup> However, it was around this time that Panzerfaust was deteriorating towards its eventual collapse,

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<sup>29</sup> Pierobon, ‘Rechtsrock’, pp.17-19.

<sup>30</sup> Andreas Balser, ‘Autonome Nationalisten’ machen eigene “Schulhof-CD”—ein ganzes Werbepaket nazistischer Erlebniswelt’, *Netz gegen Nazis*, 8 Oct 2010, <http://www.netz-gegen-nazis.de/artikel/autonome-nationalisten-machen-eigene-schulhof-cd-ein-ganzes-werbepaket-nazistischer-erlebnis-6555&usg=ALkJrhHIZGuQdfibz6Qdi1ILzbZSJx6Aow>, accessed 5 Jan 2013.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Argumentationshilfe gegen die “Schulhof-CD” der NPD mit dem Titel “BRD vs. Deutschland” August 2009’, pp.48-49, available at <http://www.netz-gegen-nazis.de/artikel/argumentationshilfe-gegen-die-neue-schulhof-cd-npd-brd-vs-deutschland-7730>, accessed 5 Jan 2013.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Hate Music Label Targets Schools’, *Anti-Defamation League*, Nov 8 2004, [http://www.adl.org/education/neo\\_nazi\\_music.asp](http://www.adl.org/education/neo_nazi_music.asp), accessed 4 Jan 2013.

undermining the project. Byron Calvert's successor organisation to Panzerfaust, Tightrope Productions, revived the venture in early 2006 with *Project Schoolyard II*, which had a lesser run of 30,000 copies.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Resistance Records produced their own CD in 2006 based on the Schulhof idea:

Resistance Records has produced a dynamic sampler CD intended for mass distribution, in the hope of getting a copy into the hands of as many White youth as possible. It is also our goal that every White kid in America—and throughout the world—understands that being racially aware and proud is an honorable thing. The songs on this disc offer a true alternative to the degenerate, anti-White music that floods mainstream radio today.... This CD is perfect for distribution at mainstream concerts, schools, college campuses, athletic events, parks, gyms, etc. Anywhere White youth congregate would be suitable for handing out sampler CDs.<sup>34</sup>

Panzerfaust Records made clear the aims of their *Project Schoolyard* drive: "We don't just entertain racist kids—we create them!"<sup>35</sup> To this end, their *Project Schoolyard* was intended to be part of a "softer" strategy, with Panzerfaust stating that the album was "inconspicuous and not overtly racial ... so that it will be able to fly below the radar screen of teachers and other people."<sup>36</sup> The extent to which this can be said to be true is debatable considering the album included songs such as 'Teutonic Uprising,' 'Hate Train Rolling,' 'White Kids' and 'Commie Scum,' but the project was clearly seen as introductory material for those who might be put off by more controversial material at an early stage.

Similarly, the NPD have avoided more extreme lyrics on their Projekt Schulhof CDs, although this may be in part motivated by a desire to avoid the indexing and censorship of the albums. It has been noted that the NPD timed the distribution of the Schulhof CDs to coincide with Landtag elections,<sup>37</sup> but it is difficult to gauge the success of the ventures. While many thousands of copies have

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<sup>33</sup> 'Project Schoolyard II', *Tightrope Catalog*, <http://tightrope.cc/catalog/cds-project-schoolyard-volume-ii-p-756.html>, accessed 4 Jan 2013.

<sup>34</sup> *Resistance*, Iss.26, Summer 2006, p.45.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in *Searchlight*, No.366, Dec 2005, p.22.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in 'Hate Music Label Targets Schools', *ADL*.

<sup>37</sup> Pierobon, 'Rechtsrock', p.17.

been distributed, the process is decentralised, with activists ordering copies with reductions in price for bulk orders. Therefore, CDs manufactured and sold does not necessarily equate with CDs distributed to young people; furthermore, there are no data available on the reception of this material by listeners and whether it succeeds in its radicalising intention. However, the energy with which these projects have been pursued by extreme-right groups—and opposed by anti-fascist organisations—has made them a highly visible form of propaganda aimed at radicalising white youth.

A different “stealth” approach targeting youth was adopted by Kevin McGuire, an American neo-Nazi with ties to the National Alliance. McGuire placed adverts for free music downloads in school newspapers, ensuring at that time that the website was acceptable to the newspapers:

In an apparent attempt to be misleading, the Victory Forever site initially displayed a page of music by independent artists, including at least one African-American artist. However, between the time when the ads were purchased and when they actually ran, the site was changed to its present, explicitly white supremacist form.<sup>38</sup>

As of at least June 2012, McGuire’s site ([www.victoryforever.com](http://www.victoryforever.com)) is no longer operating, but the scheme emphasises the importance that the extreme right place on targeting youth, and their confidence in using music to do so, particularly in the Internet age.

### **Broadening the Audience: Saga and Breivik**

As stated in Chapter One (p.74), Saga is a relative superstar of extreme-right music. Her most notorious fan, however, is Anders Behring Breivik. In the section on music in his manifesto, Breivik devotes most of the space to Saga, including the following passage:

Saga is a courageous, Swedish, female nationalist-oriented musician who creates pop-music with patriotic texts. She is, as far as I know, the best and most talented patriotic musician in the English speaking world. And for those of you, like myself, who hates [sic] “metal”, Saga is one of the few sources available

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<sup>38</sup> ADL, ‘Neo-Nazis Use Deceptive Music Downloads to Attract Young People to White Supremacy’, *Anti-Defamation League*, 21 Dec 2009, available at [http://archive.adl.org/PresRele/NeoSk\\_82/5681\\_82.htm](http://archive.adl.org/PresRele/NeoSk_82/5681_82.htm), accessed 5 Jul 2013.

that offers quality patriotic pop-music with brilliant texts.... Marxist and multiculturalist character-assassins will claim that Saga is an evil, national-socialist monsterband from hell, due to her success.... Saga has created several pop-tracks with nationalist-oriented texts that will appeal to all conservatives, and especially revolutionary conservatives of all conservative ideological denominations.<sup>39</sup>

Breivik seems to use “metal” as an umbrella term to describe the harder rock genres which make up most extreme-right music, with Saga therefore particularly valuable to Breivik as, out of all the music which might be considered politically sympathetic to his ideology, hers was the most accessible given his aesthetic preferences. This point is worth emphasising; there is a vast amount of music—particularly from the extreme right—which Breivik could have used, but he had aesthetic preferences as well as ideological ones.

After the publication of this manifesto, Saga released a statement on her website distancing herself from Breivik’s actions:

It has come to my attention that my music has been cited ... as going some way to inspiring one of the most vile and criminal acts in recent history. I cannot begin to describe how saddened I am to hear that and wanted to inform you all of my shock and utter horror at such an atrocity. My music is conceived to be a positive step towards celebrating our identity and bringing about positive cultural and political change. Like a great many of artists and musicians, my music is designed to give hope to those who otherwise would have little. Change is brought about through political and cultural means by like-minds working together for a greater cause not brought about by warped loners acting out their murderous intentions. I have never sought to encourage or promote violence and I never shall.<sup>40</sup>

Saga’s statement is undermined by her position as a leading figure in the extreme-right music scene, which has a history of association with violence and terrorism, but there are differences between Saga’s and Breivik’s ideologies. Saga is a traditional white power musician, focusing on anti-Semitism, while Breivik’s prime concern was with Muslim occupation of Europe. Breivik actually called Nazism genocidal and imperialistic, comparing it to Islam, communism and multiculturalism as a “hate ideology.” Both Breivik and Saga are, however, concerned about the political

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<sup>39</sup> Anders Behring Breivik (as Andrew Berwick), 2083: *A European Declaration of Independence*, p. 847.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Official Statement’, <http://thisissaga.com>, 27 Jul 2011, accessed 6 Oct 2011.



regimes in Western countries, which they see as fostering multiculturalism and undermining the white race.

Along with Saga, Breivik mentioned two other musicians in his manifesto who have no connection to extreme-right ideology, Clint Mansell and Helene Bøksle. Breivik saw music as a perfect way of maintaining morale and motivation while preparing for what he called a “martyrdom” operation. As well as using music extensively in the preparation for his attack, Breivik wrote that he would be listening to these musicians while carrying out his “operation.” The music of Mansell that Breivik refers to was originally recorded as the soundtrack for the film *Requiem for a Dream*, but it was its use in *Lord of The Rings* which he writes about in his manifesto:

I love this work. Lux Aeterna means “eternal light” and it really is an appropriate title. I’ve listened to this track several hundred times and I never seem to get tired of it. The track is very inspiring and invokes a type of passionate rage within you. In Lord of the Rings – a good version of this track (Requiem for a Tower version which I think is the best) is performed during the most intense fighting of one of the central battles. Since it has worked for me, it is likely that it will work for you. An invigorating piece of art.

Breivik’s obsession with computer games has been well reported, and although he is said to have used games like Modern Warfare to prepare for his “operation”, he much preferred fantasy games such as World of Warcraft, or Age of Conan. The music of Bøksle is from the soundtrack of Age of Conan, and Breivik cited it as “worthy of playing during a martyrdom operation.”<sup>41</sup> The use of music such as this seems to have allowed Breivik to envisage himself as a knight or crusader, fighting off the enemies of Europe.

The example of Breivik shows various processes of ambiguation and softening; the music of Saga provided him with ideological confirmation in an aesthetic framework to which he could relate. The music of Mansell and Bøksle allowed him to visualise himself in battle, an appropriation perhaps not intended by the creators, but not a great step from the music’s context. The association of

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<sup>41</sup> Breivik, 2083, p.849.

Mansell's music with *Lord of the Rings* may have also added an analogous layer to his own crusade.

## Conclusion

The process of softening in extreme-right music has undoubtedly been driven in part by the censorship outlined in Chapter One, but those producing censorable music do not automatically resort to softening strategies. Indeed, some in the movement, such as the singer of German band Blutausch, argue that legal threats are useful in filtering out the uncommitted to leave only the strong:

[T]he anti-fascists are getting more active. For the movement it is an advantage because the stronger the pressure [the] stronger become the links of unity and the scum of the movement is filtered out. Only the strong survive. So we think the movement is only getting stronger and the resistance will never die as long as we are alive.<sup>42</sup>

This social Darwinist interpretation is embodied in a refusal to compromise expression, and therefore simply to contravene pertinent legislation. However, even those who do not adapt the music itself do take steps to avoid prosecution: names are withheld, printed lyrics are deliberately inaccurate, and music is smuggled or shared on the Internet.

Beyond this hardcore attitude, there is a desire to diversify extreme-right music, particularly in terms of content and audiences (with the former seen as a way of reaching the latter). Often, this results in softening, a move away from the particularly controversial and confrontational material which stereotypically characterises the extreme right, and which can be regarded as alienating. While the extreme right are apt to accuse others of using subversion and coercion to achieve their goals, they are just as likely to advocate such techniques for their own cause: "Conversion is a game; a game of manipulation, subversion, infiltration, coercion, and seduction."<sup>43</sup> "Soft" introductory material is particularly evident in the Projekt

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<sup>42</sup> 'Blutausch', *Blood & Honour* (UK), Issue 21 n.d. (2000?), p.7.

<sup>43</sup> 'Recruiting', *Stormfront*, <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t927764/>, created 25 Nov 2012, accessed 19 Jun 2013.

Schulhof releases, and its imitators. Softening in music can be seen as parallel to the modernisation processes of political parties, which seeks to establish their legitimacy and make them more electorally appealing.

Such softening is driven not only by a desire to reach new audiences, but to accommodate extreme-right supporters who do not fit the conventional skinhead mould. Breivik's writing on Saga clearly shows that ideological support alone is not enough, and that aesthetic considerations do matter. The increase of releases across a range of genres reveals a recognition on the part of extreme-right musicians that shared political identity does not necessarily entail a shared musical or cultural identity. However, the barriers to entry in some genres—particularly the lack of success of female musicians in the more traditional forms such as Oi!—shows that there is still an expectation of conformity within this diversity.

## **Conclusion:**

### **What Music is Doing**

The establishment of extreme-right music, as well as its development and reinvention, is probably the most successful strand of extreme-right activity in recent years. Although it would be reductive to imagine that the extreme right is uniform, the study of this music reveals much regarding the dominant characteristics of this ideology. Conspiracism acts as an explanatory tool for extreme-right supporters who perceive themselves to be marginalised while believing in their own superiority, and also provides the imperative for the establishment of an extreme-right media, in which music is focal, to offer “truths” and reassurances to counter the allegedly subversive content of the conspirators. The elements which constitute this music scene are extremely important: specific musics are declared purely and authentically white, contrasted with black music, and therefore argued to be proof of racial and cultural differences which must be fought for to be preserved. More extreme versions of this argument depict black music as degenerate, and white music as indicative of white racial supremacy.

While this rationalisation positions white music as a polar opposite to black music, distinctions are made within the umbrella of white music, particularly in terms of class. Elitist narratives are employed, but these are repositioned as representative of whiteness rather than of social hierarchies. Within this whiteness, working-class values are privileged in a way which lauds the socioeconomic position of supporters and repudiates elites, particularly politicians, as race traitors. Extreme-right rhetoric is thus weighted along class lines, but perhaps more so on gender lines. Men are dominant, and a particular sort of militaristic masculinity is privileged. Placing contemporary extreme-right activists in the context of myth, such as positioning the skinhead as the modern-day equivalent of the Viking warrior or Nazi stormtrooper, creates a thread through which past and present figures are linked together in the context of racial supremacy and struggle. Myth also attempts to

overcome the lack of religious unity across extreme-right supporters while acting—particularly alongside fantasy—as analogy, with simple interpretations of struggle between good and evil given a racial spin. The appropriation of myth provides a thread through which the extreme right attempt to legitimate their cause; by laying claim to a nation’s or a people’s past, the extreme right claim to embody its present. Women, meanwhile, are generally expected to conform to specific roles, as sexual objects, mothers and wives, while their very presence is hoped to attract other women to the cause. For this reason, female musicians are held up as proof of the inclusive nature of extreme-right politics, while other softening strategies are adopted in order to appeal to a broader base of potential support and to project an image of extreme-right ideology as unthreatening.

Each of these aspects says something about the ideological motivation behind extreme-right politics, as well as the specific disillusionment and frustrations that they seek to appeal to. But while study of extreme-right music can lead to a greater understanding of the ideology behind it, it is important to remember that this is not merely a political expression, but also a musical phenomenon. With this in mind, it is worth considering the various ways in which music functions.

### **International Generalities, National Specifics**

Extreme-right music plays a significant role in creating an international extreme-right community. Since extreme-right politics is frequently the politics of race, belief in the inherent characteristics of whiteness is seen as overriding national distinctions. Indeed, the extreme-right music scene has British roots and the British model has been transplanted to other countries, with Ian Stuart Donaldson taking on iconic status. More recently, Saga, a Swedish singer, has risen to international prominence thanks to distribution by major American labels and coverage in American music magazines. Individual musicians thus become international figures, while music produced in a given country is perceived as having relevance to the political situation—and listeners—in others. This internationalism is as old as the scene itself—

fostered by the circulation of music and associated media, particularly magazines—but has intensified with the rise of digital media and the Internet which have facilitated and eased the fostering of transnational communities.

But while narratives of whiteness are understood as nullifying national differences, these differences are revealed by the distinctive musical cultures of the countries in question. These differences can be conspicuous: compare, for example, the inward-facing emphasis of the German scene—where songs in German are obviously tailored for a domestic audience—with the more outward-facing Swedish scene, where the prevalence of songs in English indicates a globalised intention. More subtle distinctions are also evident; while national music scenes may have their roots in the British model, that model has been tailored to suit national contexts. Chapter One explored the varying nature of these national contexts, and showed how nationally-specific legislation can influence the production, distribution and content of music. Political contexts can be particularly significant: in the United States, for example, violent revolution is seen as the primary hope of bringing about extreme-right change, and this is reflected in the combative and violent nature of much of the music. The populist approach of the British National Party, on the other hand, directs hostility towards political elites in order to complement party political activities. Thus, while it is important to recognise the international nature of extreme-right music, particularly given the importance of this aspect to musicians and supporters, national specifics are highly significant and should not be overlooked in any analysis.

### **Making money; a secondary concern**

While the income stream that music can provide can and has sustained various extreme-right political parties and movements, constructing musical identities is arguably most important. This is, after all, primarily a “message music,” and while there are those in the movement who campaign against piracy to try and keep the industry profitable, others want it freely available in order to increase its chances of

reaching new audiences, to promote and advance the extreme-right cause; it needs to be heard and disseminated as much as possible to get its message across to the desired audience. Indeed, when music is perceived to be produced primarily for financial reasons it has caused significant schism within the extreme right, most notably in the rift between British bands and the National Front which resulted in the establishment of Blood & Honour.

Thus, while the financial potential of extreme-right music has certainly been the main motivating factor for certain individuals and organisations, this cannot be considered simply as an “industry” which directs its profits into a political cause. For one thing, much of this music is unlikely to yield a significant profit; most extreme-right musicians are unlikely to be able to support themselves solely through music, and are therefore motivated by political conviction and appreciation of the culture of extreme-right music. What little financial potential the music has is also undercut by those who freely distribute it, either online or with physical copies, indicating ideological motivation rather than business sense. The fact that this often loss-making music is still produced in significant quantities indicates that the value of extreme-right music is not primarily financial.

### **Integration/indoctrination/recruitment into a community**

One of the foremost reasons that the extreme right value music is the belief that it can recruit and indoctrinate people into extreme-right politics. It is this which drives projects of free distribution such as the Projekt Schulhof CDs or file-sharing on the Internet. While it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of such campaigns, anecdotal evidence suggests that music was a fundamental factor in bringing many activists into extreme-right movements.

Such examples suggest that extreme-right music can act as a gateway: a liking for a music genre can lead to a deeper immersion in the subculture that surrounds it; if politics is an important component of a music-based subculture, a liking for the music may entail a more sympathetic reception to associated political

ideology. Music might not be able to entirely convince listeners, but it can certainly play a role in introducing a political philosophy or worldview. Furthermore, the role of musicians as political figures tallies with the extreme right's assertion of being fundamentally different to established political elites, which are portrayed as out of touch and untrustworthy. In this context, a political message expressed by a musician may have a different resonance than if heard from a politician. The very existence of a musical culture dedicated to extreme-right politics can also help to legitimise extreme-right views through the implication that they are shared by this music's audience; this certainly seems to have been the belief of Anders Behring Breivik.

Further, music affords possibilities of socialisation within a group. The marginal status of extreme-right music, its essential invisibility in terms of mass culture, means that contact with it frequently involves a social aspect, at least when it comes to the enthusiastic listener. While it is possible, particularly through Internet sources, to become familiar with extreme-right music in isolation, most evidence suggests that contact with the music scene is the result of attending concerts, being recommended to bands by acquaintances, and being handed sampler CDs. Web forums provide numerous examples of this social side of becoming familiar with the music, with the curious frequently requesting advice on music.

### **Connecting the Community**

These networks of introduction and indoctrination function as a means of connecting a community of already like-minded adherents, offering a space to meet and create networks through music. The community is consolidated through talking about music on websites, through subscribing to magazines which mainly focus on music, and through sharing files on particular websites. Music thus creates its own spaces to meet and socialise, providing an opportunity for shared experiences across geographically distinct places, particularly valuable to isolated extreme-right supporters who may be reticent in openly declaring their affiliation.



Extreme-right music can also create spaces, both real and imaginary, for the enactment of violence. Often, as in the ritualistic acts which marry music and violence in concert settings, these spaces involve a degree of group participation and, by extension, a sense of community. In addition, those preparing to commit acts of violence in the name of their political cause can, while living in isolation, feel connected to a wider community through music; this is certainly true in the case of Anders Behring Breivik, who cited the value of music in maintaining his morale during the preparation for his attacks, as well as the role he imagined it would play in accompanying his operation.

### **Defining the community**

As well as constructing the spaces in which extreme-right communities can exist, music plays an important role in identifying the characteristics of those communities, and in articulating hostility towards those on the outside, by contrasting “us” with “them.” Such distinctions can be based on a number of characteristics such as gender, race, religion and class. The limits of this distinction vary, and it is evident that the modernised extreme right have a significantly broader conception of “us” than many traditionalists, something musically evident from the softening of genres and the attempt to appropriate other musics and traditions.

The extent to which this mindset of “us” and “them” is embedded in extreme-right culture is well demonstrated by the extensive use of such rhetoric in extreme-right lyrics. Frequently, extreme-right communities are portrayed as facing overwhelming odds. The readiness of their supporters to believe in conspiracies is an indication of the difficulties the extreme right face in disseminating their message; they believe that their music and their ideology are wilfully suppressed by nefarious forces. As they assume that the mass media are compromised by such conspiracies, they value the extreme-right music industry for providing a means of unfiltered and uncensored mass communication, albeit limited in its reach. Furthermore, the belief in a conspiracy is in part predicated on the theorists’ belief that they have the insight

to see what is not evident to others, another aspect which can consolidate a sense of “us”—the insightful—as opposed to the brainwashed or conspiratorial “them.”

Fundamentally, extreme-right music asserts that it is authentic, particularly in contrast to the mainstream music industry. This is partly achieved through criticising mainstream culture as degenerate and artificial, while presenting extreme-right music as moral and virtuous, as by the common people and for their benefit. As such, the aesthetics and ideology of extreme-right music reveal much about the broader nature of extreme-right politics in general. Ideological positions are of course circulated through lyrics, which are arguably more significant to listeners than in many other genres, and are widely circulated in physical and downloadable album artwork, as well as widely available online. But just as significant are the musical qualities and choices.

Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this is in the interpretation and presentation of genre. Certain genres are frequently branded not only as “white,” but as demonstrating white supremacy, particularly over non-white music. So, classical music becomes conflated with race rather than class, and its elite and refined reputation is presented as evidence of white superiority over less civilised non-whites. Similarly, the understanding of the white working class as inherently decent, moral and upstanding is reflected in the extreme-right understanding of class-associated genres such as country and folk music.

Thus, the music not only transmits a message through lyrics, but also through other musical components. Just as folk and country music transmit messages about class, so confrontational rock and metal music provide at least in part an opportunity to assert a particular masculine identity. The favoured vocal style is more easily achieved by men, while the physical nature of concert rituals feeds into the imagining of a space for extreme-right “warriors,” a space which values those qualities of masculinity which are perceived to have been eroded by sexual equality and feminism. Lyrics often echo these sentiments, and women are typically

discouraged or prevented from participating, thus maintaining the extreme-right music scene as a predominantly masculine domain.

The fact that it is used in this way, to create a space which values a specific type of supposedly marginalised masculinity, highlights another significant function of extreme-right music: providing listeners and musicians with a sense of agency and power. Extreme-right music is, in essence, a music of frustration. It not only articulates this frustration, but acts as an avenue through which particular frustrations can be addressed. So, as well as indulging masculinity, much of this music also seeks to unashamedly celebrate and promote a broader, white identity which is felt to be neglected in favour of other cultures.

The extreme-right's appeal to a specifically white identity is a reaction to the normativity and consequent invisibility of whiteness, and the resultant sense of a lack of white culture, particularly in contrast to a readily identifiable and highly visible black culture. This invisibility of whiteness has two significant consequences for the extreme right. First, they must aggressively assert that a white culture exists, even if the propounded qualities and features of this culture vary widely. Second, they must present non-white cultures—which are often portrayed as degenerate, though less so by the “modernised” extreme right—as a threat to the integrity of this white culture. Often, the latter argument appropriates the language of diversity and multiculturalism, particularly in an appeal to cultural distinctiveness which insists that white culture is a tangible reality and needs to be protected. These processes are often facilitated through the use and interpretation of music.

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In summary, then, extreme-right music can fulfill the following roles:

- 1) Music aids the recruitment and indoctrination of new supporters, particularly since it is one of the primary means of disseminating extreme-right ideology; at the very least it is one of the primary means of circulating extreme-right ideas.
- 2) Music can play a role in assisting socialisation within the larger group, as an entry point into extreme-right culture and a guide to its norms, expectations and rituals.

- 3) The culture and media surrounding music provide a significant means of connecting extreme-right supporters, both remotely (particularly through magazines and the Internet) and physically, most prominently through gigs and festivals.
- 4) Music provides a significant means through which to imagine the community; the very existence of the music implies an audience which in turn, given the content of the music, implies a political community.
- 5) Related to the above, the imagining of a community/audience for this music can help to legitimise extreme-right beliefs through the suggestion that they are shared by others.
- 6) This music defines the characteristics of “us” and “them.” This is achieved not only through the content of the lyrics, but also through the qualities and characteristics of the music itself and what this is perceived to signify, particularly in terms of gender, class and race.
- 7) The extreme-right music scene, alongside other extreme-right media, provides an alternative to mainstream media and culture, which is perceived as antagonistic and hostile towards extreme-right progress.
- 8) This music is proclaimed to represent an authentically “white” culture, particularly in contrast with mainstream culture which is deemed to promote “black” culture and encourage the destruction of the white race.
- 9) This music provides an avenue to articulate frustration felt by many extreme-right supporters.
- 10) Extreme-right music promotes a space to privilege a particular sort of masculinity, felt to be under attack as a result of equal-rights legislation.
- 11) The masculinity promoted is imbued with defiant, martial characteristics, and extreme-right music complements both the imagining and enactment of violence.

While these qualities help to explain the continuing success of extreme-right music, the continual difficulty the extreme right face in understanding music—and, more

generally, the world—is in their necessary reduction of all topics into binaries. Such reductionism is essential in portraying circumstances in terms of “us” and “them,” good and evil, moral and degenerate, white and non-white, indigenous and foreign. While such judgements can readily be discredited (although not necessarily in the eyes of those who subscribe to them) with reference to their basis on flimsy reasoning or false evidence, they also rely on presenting various categories—such as the sexes, racial and class groups, and music genres—as absolute, unvarying and homogeneous. Not only are such judgements undermined by the diverse, ambiguous and potentially contradictory nature of things in the real world, the existence of such contradictions leads to differing interpretations by individual supporters and factions of the extreme right, contributing to the fundamental disunity which has so often characterised extreme-right politics.

Arguably, then, the most important function of extreme-right music is its ability to help resolve ideological contradictions. This music frequently presents a perspective which is simplistic and straightforward; as such, it can often be agreed upon by supporters, providing a common cause which otherwise might be hard to establish. Even so, as the analysis in this thesis suggests, the music often accentuates the very contradictions it seeks to harmonise, and exposes the challenges those contradictions present to extreme-right unity in the present day.

### **Taking Things Further**

As outlined in the Introduction, much of the existing literature on extreme-right music has been produced by anti-Fascist organisations. While this literature is extremely useful, the vested interest of these activist groups needs to be recognised as potentially dictating, or at least skewing, the emphasis of their work. Anti-Fascist organisations often need to attract outside support and funding; for this reason, there is a tendency to emphasise the threat and relevance of the extreme right, and to campaign for action against it. Much of the academic literature has taken a similar approach, emphasising the dangerous and violent side of extreme-right politics, and

in so doing raising awareness. There is nothing inherently wrong with this approach, but I have sought to balance it by understanding what extreme-right music is doing, what needs and desires it is addressing, and in turn what lies behind its appeal. It is not enough to consider how extreme-right music circulates and which figures are behind it; it is just as important to consider *why*.

Another way of understanding this thesis is as an analysis of a political grouping which constitutes and expresses itself primarily through music. In this way, it corroborates Street's argument that music can be a form of political experience.<sup>1</sup> Studies of the extreme right from political science have tended to focus on specific political parties, their manifestos and electoral performance; studies of extreme-right music have tended to neglect the significance of music as a means of political expression. In this work I have sought to unify these two approaches, recognising the qualities particular to music and its importance as a means of cultural expression, while acknowledging that extreme-right music provides a site where politics can take place.

While this dissertation has obvious resonances with the study and understanding of extreme-right politics, it has significance for work in other disciplines. General assessments of the relationship between music and politics have tended to fall into two broad categories: accounts and investigations of the relationship between music and the state; and the use of music by social movements and campaigns independent of the state. This thesis belongs to the latter category, but is distinctive in its focus, since other works have tended to focus on left-wing movements and progressive initiatives.<sup>2</sup> This is not to dismiss the content of this literature, but to point out that it creates a celebratory characterisation of music's political potential due to a focus on particular political strands, and that incorporating

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<sup>1</sup> John Street, *Music and Politics*, Cambridge: Polity, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Denselow, *When The Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop*, London: Faber and Faber, 1989; Reebee Garofalo (ed.), *Rockin' the Boat: Mass music and mass movements*, Boston: South End Press, 1992.

the use of music by other political affiliations will lead to a fuller understanding of the relationship between music and politics.

Johnson and Cloonan point out that popular music studies tends to advocate the object of its study, to romanticise and valourise them and therefore to overlook “darker” aspects of popular music.<sup>3</sup> The present study is not only relevant to Johnson and Cloonan’s point for demonstrating the ways in which music is used in a “negative” way by the extreme right, but because many of the ways in which the extreme right understand music are extensions of commonplace narratives in mainstream culture. This is most evident with regard to the racialised understanding of genre, the notion that certain genres “belong” to specific racial groups and that there are innate musical qualities distinct to racial groups. This racial perspective on music is evident in academic literature: there is no shortage of work on “black” music, but comparatively little on how “whiteness” in music is understood, particularly outside the realms of explicitly racist music, highlighting the commonplace assumption that race is only significant in non-white contexts.

I have picked out the example of race here, but similar analyses could be forwarded with reference to extreme-right narratives of gender, class, religion and national identity. It is, therefore, not uncommon for conventions and commonplace assumptions in the mainstream to be put into the service of extremism. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, extremism does not exist in a vacuum, and it is important to consider not only those aspects which mark it as “extreme,” but also the commonalities it holds with wider culture. Second, while the study of extremism is important in itself, it can also play an important role in elucidating common features of its host society, particularly how unspoken, or at least largely unrecognised, assumptions about identity permeate culture.

More specifically, this thesis is intended as a contribution to the understanding of the relationship between cultural expression and violence. This is

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<sup>3</sup> Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009, pp.193-194.

something of a nascent field which has understandably focused on specific acts of violence and links to music. While extreme-right case studies can contribute to this approach—particularly of such major attacks as those perpetrated by Anders Behring Breivik, but also acts of violence at a “lower” level—this musical culture demonstrates another significance of the music-violence relationship, specifically the value of music as symbolic violence. Violence here is not necessarily enacted, but imagined, an everyday means of coping with frustration.

Finally, the concept of softening introduced here can be a helpful concept for understanding the evolution of political parties and ideas. Many extreme-right movements are undergoing softening processes and it can therefore appear that extremism is on the wane; however, as I have sought to demonstrate, it has merely adapted to suit contemporary circumstances. While political parties of the extreme right can achieve successes in the democratic realm thanks to a softer approach, their ideas can also enter and influence mainstream political ideas.





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<http://www.bloodandhonour.org/>, rival claimant to Blood & Honour.

<http://www.bnp.org.uk/>, official website of the British National Party.

<http://www.jewwatch.com/>, site naming Jews in positions of power and influence.

<http://en.metapedia.org/>, extreme-right version of Wikipedia.

<http://www.npd.de/>, official website of the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party of Germany)

<http://www.nsbm.org/>, website dedicated to National Socialist Black Metal.

<http://www.rac-forum.org/>, directory site with links to album torrent downloads, which frequently include scans of album sleeves.

<http://www.redwatch.org/>, a website which publishes photographs and personal information of enemies of the extreme right, particularly in Britain.

<http://www.stormfront.org/>, the largest extreme-right web forum, based in the United States.

<http://www.sverigedemokraterna.se/>, official website of the Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats).

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